

Neal Potter

Design Knowledge, Drawing and Process

Catalogue of works in the University of Lincoln

Compiled and edited with a biographical essay by
Geoff Matthews



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Published 2007 by the University of Lincoln



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Published by:
University of Lincoln
Brayford Pool
Lincoln
LN6 7TS
England

ISBN 9781860502217

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Preface

There is little published work that provides a true insight into the design discipline in and of itself. The predominant formats currently on offer are either the edited photographic record of a designer's works with journalistic commentary or the theorised, critical paper by a design historian/theorist.

This publication is one of those rare exceptions engaging with the lived reality of the design process itself. To truly understand design it is necessary to acknowledge and investigate the specific and mediated process behind the works and careers of key individual designers. They are the catalysts bringing creativity and innovation to generically understood methodologies. Formal design procedures evolve and are enriched by their unique contributions.

Exhibition designer Neal Potter is one such seminal figure. Dr

Geoff Matthews has delivered an enlightening catalogue of his contribution. It reveals Potter's thoughts, processes and outputs in relation to his particular discipline. Exhibition design is a complex process, addressing the pragmatic, emotional and aspirational aspects of a subject or issue. Potter has demonstrated how this discipline can arrange perceptions, alter values and re-configure the familiar. The Museum of the Moving Image and the Earth Galleries Atrium at the Natural History Museum are just two of his iconic projects.

Having helped to secure funding, whilst at the University of Lincoln, to move and archive Potter's original drawings and plans I am more than pleased to see a publication like this come to fruition. Such a refreshing approach is to be applauded and revisited. We are presented with an intriguing taster and left with the desire for more along the same lines.

Those that know something about exhibition design as a discipline recognize the importance of this project. I have been fortunate over the years to work with remarkably talented, perceptive and supportive academic colleagues so I am still here carving out little pockets of time and scraping together small sums of money to keep the work moving slowly but surely forwards. I am enormously grateful for the scope they allow me to do this. Without my mentioning everyone by name you know I know who you are.

I appreciate the hospitality the Potter family, Angela, Zoe and Neal, extended to me and look forward to the opportunity to return the favour. I reserve the biggest thank you, of course, for Neal Potter himself. He has been a remarkably patient and willing subject; his honesty, generosity, unassuming manner and wit make this project

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Kathie Jenkins, formerly Curator of the European Illustration Collection, Hull, for her moral support and professional guidance and for storing the Neal Potter loan collection in ideal conditions for several years. I am profoundly grateful to Dr Rachel Faulding who methodically surveyed the condition of items, created detailed collection management records and ensured that they were stored securely in our new home in Lincoln. I thank Emma Jones for taking some of the pressure off me at a particularly busy time by transcribing some of the interviews with Neal Potter. And I thank Michael Blackburn for casting a fresh eye over my laboured texts and introducing some consistency in punctuation and presentation, and Paul Middleton for advising on page design.

Anyone wondering why it has taken so long for the project to reach this point should be reassured. It is not laziness or tardiness on my part and not down to lack of support from academic colleagues.

the most enjoyable and rewarding of experiences. I hold Neal in the highest regard; he is a consummate professional, an inspiration, and I believe can help us to understand the development of a crucial late twentieth-century phenomenon. The 'implosion of architecture and media', the 'hybridity of the real', the 'exhibitionary complex', the 'communicative environment', together these ideas perhaps hint at its significance.

I have done my best to render factual information accurately and interpret evidence fairly; any mistakes are therefore my responsibility and I invite correction and critique. The advantage of an electronic publication of course is that revision and extension of the work is relatively straightforward. This is an on-going project; now I have the bit between my teeth I intend to go the full distance.

Geoff Matthews, October 2007

respectively. From an exhibition design perspective we have our own research focus on the design of ‘communicative environments’ which ties in with the remit of the University’s Centre for Sustainable Architecture and Environments. And as one might expect, in the wider research community there is a range of research activity relating communicative environment and material culture issues to wider questions of built environment and institutional sustainability. Through the nascent Exhibitions Platform International Research Network we have links with like-minded academics in over thirty universities around the globe; so we feel we are in a good place at a good time.

To understand where we are going, it is necessary to understand where we have come from and how we got here. What is true in philosophy in general is certainly true in exhibition design research. Exhibition design has a hidden past and recovering it is no

Introduction

Some years ago a former colleague openly tried to block the creation of a degree-level course in exhibition design; he thought the subject presented too little academic challenge. For obvious reasons he failed. As the pinnacle of communication disciplines, the one that brings all of the others together, and as a practice operating across the boundaries between architecture, design, organization, media and technology, exhibition design presents an enormous challenge to the enquiring, critical, creative mind. It involves analysing and interpreting the behaviour of institutions, human beings and technical systems, and consequently engages with an eclectic range of theory that directly underpins critical thinking in creative practice.

Exhibition and museum design has been formally taught at University of Lincoln and its precursor institutions for 60 years, at undergraduate and postgraduate degree levels for over 15 and 10 years

easy task. Exhibitions by definition are fleeting events, temporary constructs, and ephemeral documents. Often what survives is fragmentary, insubstantial and buried under layers of institutional and biographical sediment. Recovering and reconstructing an exhibition design process is a kind of archaeology. And as all archaeologists know, it does not pay to be in too much of a hurry. We work with ‘traces’ and it may take a long time to accumulate sufficient evidence of an exhibition design to begin interpreting, many interpretations to achieve the basis for accurate reconstruction of an exhibition design process, reconstructions of many processes to build a believable picture of exhibition design culture.

There is no logical starting point, so, it is just as well to take the opportunities that present themselves. When a great exhibition designer, like Neal Potter, loans a collection of drawings relating to some of his most creative work, then, no matter how fragmen-

tary the evidence, it represents a golden opportunity to begin the journey into exhibition design culture. Although unbalanced, the collection promises real insights into the exhibition design process. Potter himself is a willing subject; modest, honest, generous and incredibly patient. This has helped enormously. He provided a copy of his unpublished autobiography, all 212 well-written pages of it, and participated in nine hours of interviews during which he was consistently thoughtful and forthcoming. We have a wealth of additional material ready for future study, and beyond the present modest publication, there is much more that we can do, but first things first.

The principle aim of this catalogue is to consolidate the research work undertaken so far. To do this it: 1) records an accurate description of the material in the loan collection, and; 2) provides essential pointers as to the context in which each drawing was

reviews of his work were analysed to plan the interpretive research. Semi-structured interviews were designed to address a range of questions. What formative experiences marked Potter's progressive self-realization as 'designer', 'exhibition designer' and 'designer of cultural exhibitions'? How should we understand the roles of named individuals as mentors, and can we identify any other people or events that influenced Potter particularly during the period up to 1985? Can we establish an accurate chronology of projects, including their duration, the extent of the design process, the roles of participants and the significance of each project as a career achievement, and can we fill in any gaps in the record? Using the images as a stimulus, what additional information can Potter remember? Does Potter have an explicit design philosophy? I.e. does he have a view on the nature of designing as an activity? And what is his perspective on the historical, political and cultural context of his projects, his career, and the profession to which he belongs?

produced and its purpose, the methods, techniques and media used in its creation, the people, places and events with which it is associated, the design concept(s) it attempts to communicate and what inspired them, its iconography, and the ideas that link one drawing with another and one project with another.

The methods used are layered; essentially interpretative research builds on a foundation of museographical documentation. A conservator inspected each piece to determine its physical attributes and condition, and produced museum-standard collection management records. The size, material, location, condition, appearance and provenance of every item are known and the material is stored in a secure location with stable environmental conditions.

Subsequently, this collection documentation, the autobiography and a selection of Potter's other writings, together with published

Selected sections of interview were transcribed. These texts, together with the autobiography and observational analysis of images in the collection were then used as the basis for interpretation and to synthesise the texts in the following pages.

The next section offers an outline biography of Neal Potter and concentrates on situating projects. At the end is a diagrammatic time line showing at a glance when projects were undertaken and how long they lasted. That is followed by the main body of the catalogue. Items are listed in numerical order, i.e. the order in which they were originally catalogued, with the exception of 176, which is on the same page as 137. The final section of text is an afterword that I hope will be particularly noted by designers and design students.

themselves and with collaborators. But exhibition design of this sort requires much more of designers. They must be able to assimilate large quantities of disparate information, see the pattern in it and discern what is important to creating a balanced, entertaining, educational experience; and they must be able to draw persuasive visual concepts that embody these insights. In this regard Neal Potter's ability to handle complexity is masterful and was the result of a journey through the English educational system and a thoroughgoing apprenticeship in two Government departments.

Neal Potter was born in 1949 in the Derbyshire mining village of Cresswell. As a consequence of the 1944 Education Act his schooling was one framed by the ideal of 'opportunity for all'. He progressed from local infants' and primary schools via 11-plus exam success to Shirebrook Grammar School and he stayed on post-16 to study 'A' Levels in Art, History and English. Potter had struggled with English throughout his education and this depressed his performance in many

Neal Potter

Neal Potter is one of the more important designers of cultural exhibitions of the last quarter century. He took a leading creative role in the British pavilion at Expo '85 in Japan. He was the designer of the seminal Museum of the Moving Image (1986-8) on London's South Bank. He rescued the Ecology Gallery (1989-91) project at the Natural History Museum, London. He transformed an almost unusable building for the British Pavilion at Expo '92 into the most distinctive and effective national presentation at the event. He designed the stunning entrance to the Earth Galleries at the Natural History Museum in London (1996). He created the Walk Through the 20th Century exhibition at the Cultural Centre of Belém in Lisbon for the 100-day festival preceding Expo '98. His latest major work, which exemplifies his approach as creative interpreter and designer, is the National Cold War Exhibition at the Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford (2003-7).

All designers use visual means to engage in a creative dialogue with

subjects; it is ironic therefore that at school the only 'A' level he passed was in English Literature. At Chesterfield Art School, during the first Foundation year, he added 'A' levels in Art and Art History and then joined a new 3-year Environmental Design programme with a broad if 'messy' curriculum. It was in this melting-pot that Potter found his creative direction.

I do remember where I was when I began my first attempts at designing an exhibition. The ideas flowed so freely and seemed to incorporate all the 'art' disciplines I had ever encountered: sculpture, painting, graphics, furniture design, product design, sound, theatre and film. From that moment, in the spring of 1969, on the third floor of converted flourmill in Lordsmill Street, Chesterfield my vocation began. (Potter, 2000a, 77)

The exhibition in question was for 'The Young Volunteer Force', a national campaign to improve local communities. It was held in the

House of Commons in November 1969. Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Leader of the Opposition, Edward Heath, both spoke to Potter at the opening. On the strength of this project Chesterfield College created an Exhibition Design course. Potter was now in his element having unconsciously shaped the situation to suit his own needs. He graduated with an Society of Industrial Artists and Designers (SIAD) qualification in Exhibition Design and a College Diploma in Environmental Design. It was Ken Burgess, a London based sculptor and Potter's most influential tutor, who encouraged him to go further.

He applied to, and failed to gain a place at, the Royal College of Art. Norman Potter (no relation), visiting tutor at Chesterfield College and one-time RCA tutor, suggested he apply to Bristol Polytechnic for a one-year workshop-based postgraduate course in the Built Environment School. He did, successfully, and it was during this year that he worked with a primary school community to design and build a sports pavilion. This experience transformed his creative perspective

need for the rest of my career.' DTI work was dominated by the publicity needs of a range of key government research establishments. Potter undertook hundreds of projects during the next six years, including smaller overseas exhibits for the Computer Aided Design Centre, and the management of exhibitions for the busy 'Off-shore' sector. Potter developed rapidly into an all-rounder, able to write well-thought through briefing documents, design, detail and specify exhibits, manage production, commission films, literature and advertising, and supervise on-site work.

Then in 1978 he seized the opportunity to move to the Central Office of Information, an important central government agency set up to handle larger communications projects for government departments. This enabled Potter to specialize and to join the largest exhibitions team in the Civil Service. Three immediate bosses had a great influence on Potter. His boss at beginning was Jack London, 'a stickler for detail', who taught Potter to think ahead. Vic Vallance 'a very good

to one very much centred on rising to the challenge of real-world interests through empathy with the user, unlimited creative response and attention to practical detail. These are qualities that Potter has sustained throughout his subsequent career; they are the touchstones that have released moments of genius in each of the four decades in which he has been designing and delivering major cultural exhibitions.

Between finishing his year in Bristol and landing his first salaried design job Potter married his girl friend of three years, Angela Barbara Green. The job was with the Department for Trade and Industry, in the centre of Westminster. So, in November 1972 he became a Civil Servant. Potter joined an established team of exhibition production experts: John Darnell, Denis Osborne, and Bob Cashmore, under the paternal leadership of the 'visionary, adventurous, brave and amusing' Andrew Page Watson GM. Potter acknowledges that 'they taught me so much and in those first few years set me up with the skills I would

designer, one of the best in the country' was Potter's second boss, with whom he shared an office for several years, and for Potter's last year or so Ron Harper was his boss. From '78 to '83 Potter undertook eight to ten bigger projects each year, in-filled with lots of smaller jobs, and then he had an extraordinary break. Potter describes it as 'the beginning of the big time.' The COI got the job of producing the British pavilion at Expo '85 in Tsukuba, Japan. Ron Harper was assigned as lead designer and Potter as his assistant. It emerged fairly quickly that Harper was not comfortable with the brief and his cool, abstract, visual language was not what was needed. Potter was producing strongly-themed, highly theatrical visual concepts which caught the eye of senior managers. Potter was made lead designer and the project kept Potter occupied for the following year. It was an enormous success in Japan, although made very little impact in Britain. However, through this his reputation spread beyond the Civil Service. Potter did some work on the British pavilion project for Expo '86 before deciding to

leave the COI. His next appointment was a surprising one, an exhibition management job with INMARSAT, the International Maritime Satellite Organization. As Potter put it, it involved ‘...no design, just management. It seemed the right thing to do to progress my career.’ He left the COI in September 1985 but stayed at INMARSAT for only just over a year. Something wonderful happened!

Probably out of curiosity as much as anything, Potter responded to an advert for a designer for a new museum on London’s South Bank, The Museum of the Moving Image. He was interviewed, saw the site, and met the British Film Institute’s chairman, Sir Richard Attenborough, who remarked, ‘Mr Potter, your reputation precedes you.’ He was offered a three-year contract, but was not persuaded. It seemed like a short-term deal, a big risk to take, with uncertain career benefits. Potter went on holiday to see Expo ’86 in Vancouver. But he was pursued, by telephone, by letter. He still said ‘no’. Two things changed his mind. On the way back from his office one night, he stopped to peer over

I have no doubt in my mind whatsoever and I am quite sure that it is a view shared by many others, that at the end of the day it was your genius that turned an idea into a triumph of reality. (Sir Richard Attenborough, quoted in Potter, 2000a, 138).

And by the press:

Potter’s rise since leaving the COI is due to his commitment to getting it right rather than building monuments to his own ego....Potter works thoroughly with odd spates of genius. (Design Week, April 1990).

It was a groundbreaking piece of museum design, much lauded, much copied. What made it different was the exhibition’s sustained level of immersive imagery, engaging activity, and intellectual integrity. As far as museum design is concerned it raised the bar several notches. Following the opening in September 1988 Potter continued straight on to designing The Lives of Charlie Chaplin exhibition for MOMI and

Waterloo Bridge at the strange bright red bubbles lining the bridge: ‘the whole South Bank, for that one moment, looked very exciting.’ Later, the morning after the final night of a job in Nairobi, the film *That’s Entertainment* came on television: ‘Suddenly I was reminded of those fabulous MGM musicals and realised that if you are going to work with subject matters [sic] there was no subject better than film.’

He started work at MOMI in November 1986. MOMI changed Potter’s life forever. He worked directly to Leslie Hardcastle, the Controller of the National Film Theatre. Architect Brian Avery created a two-storey high space under Waterloo Bridge immediately behind and connected to the NFT itself. It took just 22 months to fill that space and the space beneath, with a spectacular array of entertaining and informative exhibits that added up to the most complete story of the moving image ever attempted in an exhibition. Potter’s genius was recognised at the BFI:

in subsequent years was commissioned to do further special exhibitions just as he had been promised in his original contract.

Meanwhile, he was suddenly in demand. Having been courted by several major consultancies, Potter decided to join Event Communications as Design Director. However, without any ‘live’ projects to engage him Potter knew very quickly that he needed to move on. The situation was complicated because the job he really wanted to do next, the British pavilion for Expo ’92, might be won by the pitch he had worked on at Event Communications. With this in mind he agreed to return if they won the job. It got even more complicated. The client, The Department for Trade and Industry, liked some of the ideas in Event’s pitch, wanted Potter to lead the project, but also were ‘minded’ to award the contract to Fitch Benoy, a competing company! Even with an agreement hammered out between Event and Fitch, the creative team was never going to work and Potter said so and bowed out.

The DTI opened up negotiations again; they even prompted Conran Design Group, another consultancy in the running, 'to strengthen their team'. They did.

As this farcical episode unfolded Potter was called in by the Natural History Museum to re-energize its Ecology Gallery project. This had hit problems at the end of 1989 and the head of design at the museum had resigned. Re-engaging the in-house team was a challenge that Potter met with his usual calm, clear thinking, creative drive and wit.

He was still only half way through the project when Conran won the Expo '92 project, with only one condition; the DTI wanted Potter on board to lead the project. This was a two-year project, just as the MOMI project had been. The difference was that the MOMI project had been led by a visionary, Leslie Hardcastle, with whom Potter could create magic, whereas the Expo '92 project was led by a client that didn't know what it wanted until it saw it, one that had already

It was at this time, the end of 1991 that Barry Lord, principal of Lord Cultural Planning, visited Potter and invited him to join a major project in Singapore. Although he was still committed on existing projects he agreed to do some preliminary concept work on the Singapore Discovery Centre during the following six months. The other project that Potter had taken on was a temporary show on '70 Years of Radio' in the BBC's Broadcasting House. It was successful and led to the decision to open up Broadcasting House to visitors on a more permanent basis. Unfortunately at the end of 1992 the follow-up project was won by Event Communications. The late David Hatch, then Managing Director of BBC Radio, thought Potter's scheme 'too cerebral'. With Expo '92 out of the way the pressure eased a little. Potter did a small exhibit to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein and this opened at the Imperial War Museum in October '92. Potter also renewed his contact with Leslie Hardcastle and began what would turn out to be a series of special exhibitions for the Museum of the Moving Image.

bought a building that was totally unsuitable for exhibition purposes. The architect, Nicholas Grimshaw, was not to blame. He did his best to respond to a grossly inadequate brief which specified an unrealistically high visitor flow and no content, no message, no purpose. Potter's contribution was to find a big idea and make it work. The result was a walk-through show that aimed to transform the British image. The synchronized live performance and multimedia presentation was masterful in conception; doing two identical shows in parallel to achieve visitor throughput was ingenious. Altogether it was one of the more successful and memorable presentations at Expo '92. The building, much publicized at the time for its green credentials, became an embarrassment. As intended, it was dismantled ready for reuse, but sadly no-one wanted it. Even before the Expo project was finished Potter had decided not to stay with Conran Design Group. When it was sold off and became RSCG Conran he was even more certain he needed to leave, 'somehow the Conran magic was no longer there.'

However, the Singapore connection now took off and he found himself 'advising major government agencies in Singapore on how they could communicate national policy through exhibitions and theatres'. Although Potter didn't have the freedom to build his own team, and wasn't pleased with the quality of the resulting exhibition, the relationship with Lord worked well enough and the Singapore Discovery Centre opened in November 1996. Lord was an excellent businessman and the work was profitable for Potter. However, money has never been Potter's main concern, and for understandable reasons, this way of working was not something he was keen to repeat. When the former chief researcher at SDC, Cheng Lai Yee, set up her own consultancy, Potter found himself with a more sympathetic partner with local connections. Work in Singapore continued through to 1999 and involved braver and more innovative solutions to the Singapore Government's educational objectives.

The Singapore work was always 'part-time' and left plenty of scope for Potter to take on other projects, usually, but not always, a bit closer to home. At the end of 1993 on the recommendation of the highly respected museum designer, Robin Wade, he was approached with a most unusual proposition. A member of the Olsen family in the USA (owners of the eponymous shipping company) wanted to create a museum of wrist watches, would Potter put some creative ideas together to show how it might work? Several images from that small project are included in this loan collection. Potter also did a system-built, travelling exhibition for the British government's Foreign Office on Muslims on Britain, which went to Saudi Arabia and Oman.

The next substantial project was one that put Potter back in the public eye in the UK for a while, the Earth Galleries Atrium at the Natural History Museum in London. The brief presented two big challenges, to deliver visitors straight into the themed galleries on the top floor of the museum and, to find an appropriate theme to prepare visitors

In 1994 Paul Allen, co-founder of the Microsoft Corporation, had proposed a Jimi Hendrix Museum in Seattle. The project had since taken on a broader theme and was being led by Allen's sister, Jody Pattern. Allen had said that the Museum of the Moving Image was his favourite museum in the world and the Earth Galleries atrium had gripped Pattern's imagination; this was what she wanted for Seattle. Frank O Gehry had been appointed as the architect and Potter was invited to work on the master plan for what was now called The Experience Music Project. Potter's time in Gehry's studio was inspirational, 'It doesn't come any better than this. Pure creativity backed up by professional knowledge.' This was the busiest period of Potter's career. He had jobs running simultaneously in Portugal, Germany, Singapore, Hong Kong and Belgium and had six permanent and three temporary staff in his office. The projects in Hong Kong and Belgium were relatively minor, but the others were all in their different ways something to write home about.

emotionally and intellectually for the Earth Galleries. The tone had to be just right. The idea came to Potter in a moment of spectacular clarity. He saw the earth as a solitary, fragile globe hanging in the darkness of space with an escalator rising up and into its fiery core. The image was irresistible, the concept witty, and the technical challenge frightening. The project started early 1995 and, working with draughtsman John Blurton and engineer Peter Kemp, took fifteen months to work up in detail. The boldness and directness of the message it delivers is as stunning today as it was the day it opened in July 1996.

While this was going on, from the middle of 1995 onwards, Potter was also working on a master plan for the Museum of the Docklands. This developed over a period of a year and a half and he was devastated not to win the design phase of the project. Apparently the project's chairman didn't like the Earth Galleries Atrium! Potter's disappointment, however, was soon swept away.

Expo '98 Director, Antonio Mega Ferreira, admired Potter's work on the Museum of the Moving Image and Expo '92. So in May 1996, when a fax arrived inviting Potter to design the major exhibition of the 100-day festival preceding Expo '98 Lisbon, it was not a creative pitch that was on offer it was the whole job, a 3000m² turn-key project with a £1 million budget plus fees!

Shortly after this, Potter appointed two graduate designers, Alison Stapley and Joanna Jarvis. Stapley worked with Potter on the Portuguese project. A Walk Through the 20th Century was staged at the Cultural Centre of Belém, one of Lisbon's most beautiful and modern art galleries. The brief was extraordinarily ambitious and aimed to bring together an international collection of paintings, sculpture, photography, film, video, artefacts and costumes to create a portrait of the 20th century. In Potter's words, 'We were about to upset the art world by giving equal status to a vacuum cleaner or an aspirin as we

would to works by Hockney or Man Ray.' Potter rose to the challenge by organizing the exhibition into twelve themed sections - Crisis (*fin de siècle*), Religion, Leisure, Myth, Death, Health, Sex, Technology, Food, Work, Speed and, Mind and Frontiers - and punctuating the show liberally with highly theatrical settings and installations. It was a huge success, received fabulous reviews from the press and broke all records for attendance at the Cultural Centre of Belém.

Joanna Jarvis' first project was already underway when she joined Potter's studio, the design of the dark ride at the Opel visitor centre in Russelheim, Germany. This was followed by another project in Germany, for which she did most of the work, Gene Worlds at the National Art and Exhibition Hall, Bonn. A difficult technical subject, the exhibition was part of a nation-wide campaign to raise public awareness of genetic engineering technology. Under Potter's guidance Jarvis produced a high-impact show that maximised the use of large-scale models and three-dimensional graphic communications.

production were managed by the museum's own staff. However, this did lead to what is probably Potter's most comprehensive museum project since the Museum of the Moving Image.

The National Cold War Exhibition at the RAF Museum's second site, Cosford, had a very practical starting point. The museum had accumulated a collection of mainly post-World War 2 military aircraft, and it was sat in a field slowly rotting. A successful Heritage Lottery fund bid meant that they could do something about it. At the beginning of the project Potter moved extremely quickly to establish an interpretation-based concept for the new facility, which became part of the brief for the architect of the building. The result is a visually stunning and thoroughly integrated design. The collection discussed in the following pages includes a drawing that connects these two projects, the Museum of the Moving Image and The National Cold War Exhibition, in a most revealing way. See: 150. Potter's genius, if it lies anywhere, lies in his ability to generate simple, powerful exhibit

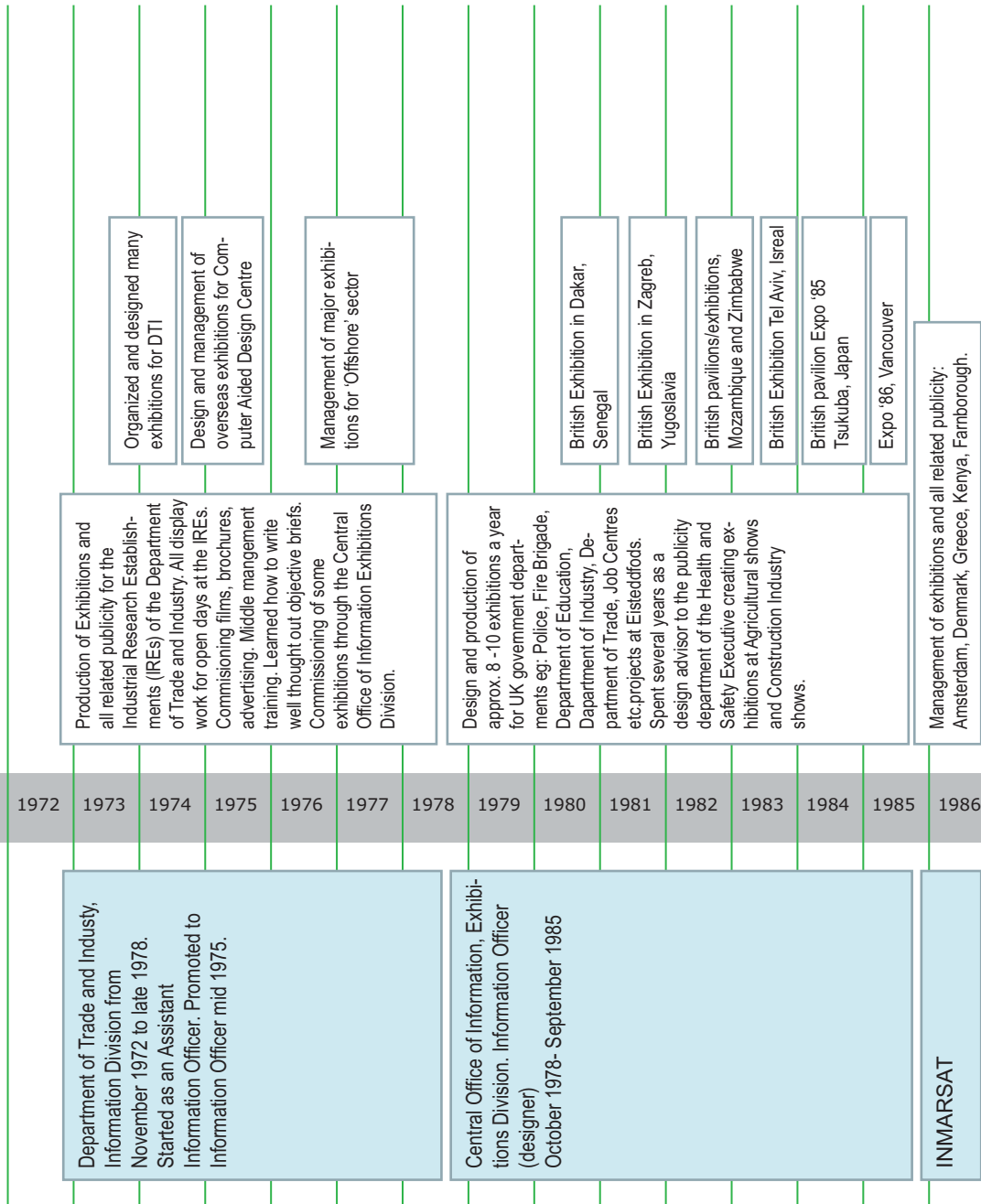
During this frantic period of 1996-8 work on the Singapore History Exhibition project was the most profitable project even though it was never built. In 1999 there was a further project to design the refit of the Singapore Discovery Centre. This was even more profitable, not least because the master planning and concept design phases were paid on daily consultancy rate and once again never implemented.

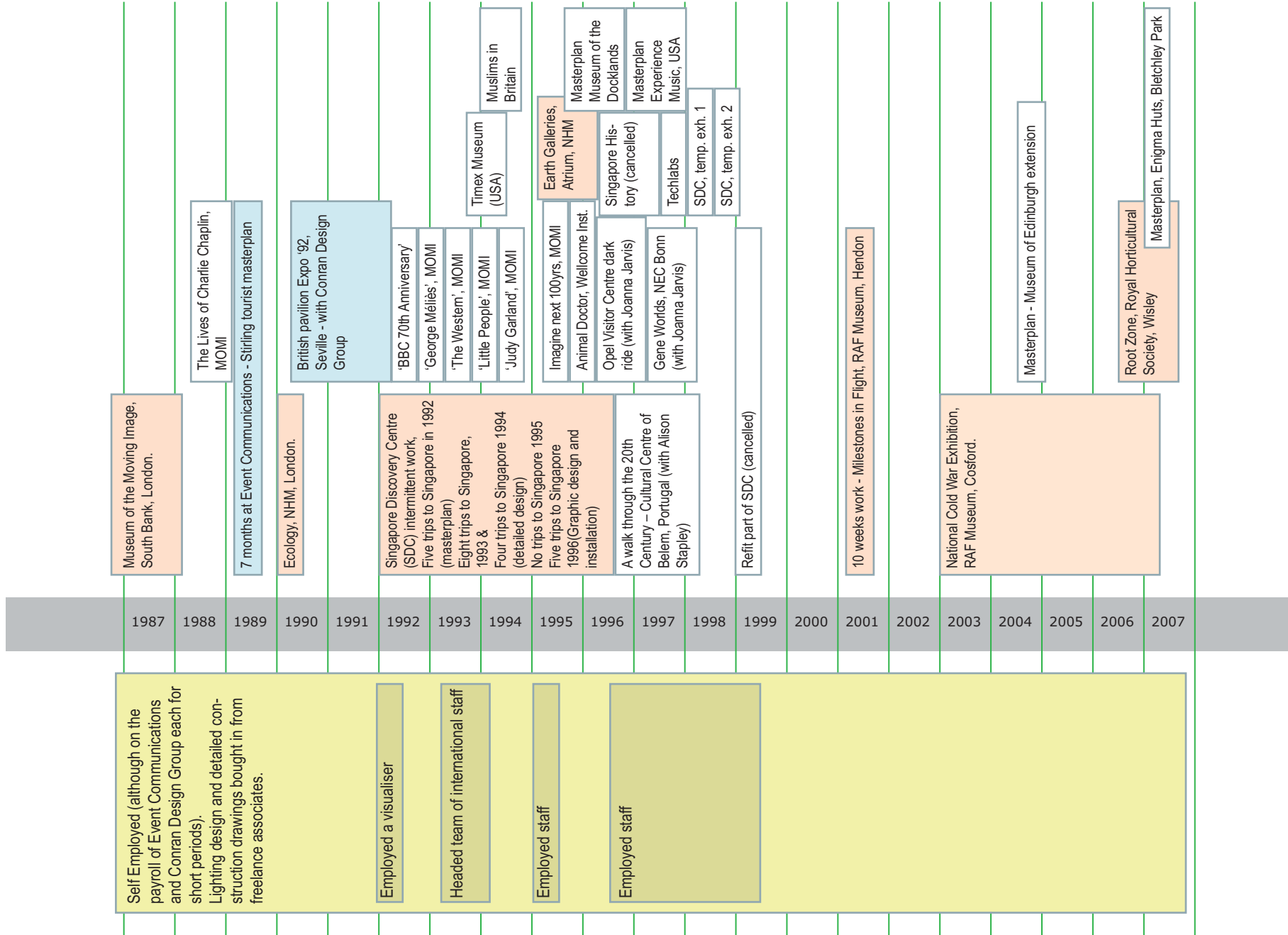
The millennium itself was both hopeful and wicked for Potter. He became a Visiting Professor in exhibition design, led the revival of the Exhibitions Group at the Chartered Society of Designers, wrote an autobiography and judiciously avoided getting involved in any of the Dome projects. (Potter, 1999 & 2000b) But from the end of the SDC project in the autumn of 1999 through to the beginning of 2003 Potter he had only 10 weeks' paid design work. This involved creating a master plan and producing some exhibit designs for the Milestones in Flight exhibition at the RAF Museum, Hendon. Detail design and

concepts. And I use the word 'concept' advisedly; at the same time as hitting the nail on the head as regards communicating an idea clearly through an exhibit design, he finds combinations of symbolic form and imagery that embed a principle or process. Such 'concepts' have the power to adapt in scale and content without losing their integrity and readability. Potter is modest about his abilities: 'I found my way to the top fueled by 90% hard work, 5% talent and 5% nouse. I think its the 5% nouse that makes the difference.' (Potter, 2000a, 187) But he underestimates the ability I draw attention to here; few designers have the wit and creativity to consistently read complex situations correctly and get the ideas right in the first place. Potter has said it himself: 'The thing I bring to the party is a big idea, and hopefully a canvas for things to happen.' (Pes, 2007, 34-5)

Chronology of projects

Salaried posts
Self-employed
'Permanent' exhibitions







127

Neal Potter
(with elements by Bob
Harvey)

29 x 41cm
Not signed or dated
Not mounted or framed

Brief Description:

Clock face with Ingersol
wristwatches and Roman
numerals. Group of
spectators in foreground.
Predominantly worked in
blues and yellows.

Media

Colour photocopy of
composite artwork.
Original drawing in spirit-
based marker with montage
of printed ephemera.

Timex - Back in Time

This is one of a series of design concept visuals produced at the end of 1993, for a potential Ingersol/Timex museum in America.

Most visuals for this project were produced by Bob Harvey to briefs provided by Potter. See: 128-133, and 174. The technique here demonstrates Potter's approach when under extreme pressure of work. The visual is a colour photocopy of a composite of foreground figures, originally drawn by the illustrator Bob Harvey for an earlier project, and montage work composed by Potter himself. Potter decided that it would be quicker to brief a trusted illustrator to produce the other visuals required for this project.

This particular concept was for the introductory exhibit. The idea was to take the audience back through time to the beginning of the Timex story. It comprises a central back projection surrounded by twelve monitors playing synchronized video from laser-disk players.

It was originally inspired by an exhibit seen by Potter at Expo '86, probably in the Canadian Pacific pavilion. Potter himself had begun to exploit the new laser-disk technology in his design for the British pavilions at Expo '85 and Expo '86, projects undertaken whilst he was employed by the British government's Central Office of Information. The concept recurs in Potter's work several times during the following decade. It was eventually realized in Singapore in the late 90s.

The client was the Olsen family who ran Fred Olsen Shipping Lines. Potter dealt with an intermediary on this project, who was at the time Operations Manager at the Beaulieu Motor Museum and later managed operations at the Millennium Dome. The series of visuals was used to illustrate an A4 format presentation booklet, which was delivered to the client in the USA. The museum proposal was not taken forward.



128

Bob Harvey

29 x 41cm

Not signed or dated

Not mounted or framed

Brief Description:

Large watch-shaped exhibit to the right of image. Figure at left with girl operating exhibit. Text: REMEMBER WHEN? at top of image. Predominantly worked in khaki, turquoise, red and cream.

Media

Colour photocopy of artwork. Original drawing in pencil, pen and spirit-based marker, possibly with some touches of gouache.

Timex - Remember When?

This design concept visual was drawn by Bob Harvey and probably dates from late 1993. It is one of a series used to present Potter's creative exploration of the potential for an Ingersol/Timex museum in the United States of America. See: 127, 129-133, and 174.

Potter was beginning to use the computer at this time, particularly for putting documents together. Harvey was probably briefed to produce quick sketches rather than highly finished art, to be scanned and dropped into a presentation document.

The purpose of this illustration is to communicate the potential for interactivity in the exhibition using laser-disk technology. The specific idea behind this exhibit concept is to allow the visitor to scroll back and forth through different historical styles of wristwatch. The expressive three-dimensional form was inspired by the first digital watch, which had an LED display that lit up at the push of a button.



129

Bob Harvey

29 x 41cm

Not mounted or framed

Brief Description:

Interior exhibition space filled with oversized watch and clock mechanisms.

Ceiling features large cogs. 4 standing figures observing and operating exhibits.

Predominantly worked in browns, golds, and greens.

Text to top right of image: 'WHAT'S IN A WATCH?'

Media

Colour photocopy of artwork. Original artwork in pencil, pen, spirit-based marker, possibly with some touches of gouache.

Timex - What's in a Watch?

This is an illustration by Bob Harvey produced for Potter's work on a proposed Ingersol/Timex museum in the United States of America. See: 127, 128, 130-133, and 174.

Some designers would approach this kind of 'collection-based' project by visualizing a clean row of showcases in a crisp white interior, but Potter is no minimalist. In this visual there is no

specific exhibit concept; rather the image of the mechanism is being used to build an 'atmosphere'. It exemplifies Potter's creative strategy in the early stage of an exhibition project. The purpose of this was to help the client visualize the potential of the interior, and particularly the power of three-dimensional form and immersive imagery to establish an emotional connection with a story and provide an engaging experience for the visitor.



130

Neal Potter (with elements
by Bob Harvey)

29 x 41cm
Not signed or dated
Not mounted or framed

Brief Description:

Left-hand side: male figure in front of exhibit. Right-hand side: sections of wheels displaying images of watches. Predominantly worked in greens, blues, browns, yellows and reds. Text at bottom right of image: 'Animated Display Cases ARE THE KEY', 'ELECTRONIC OR MECHANICAL'.

Media

Colour photocopy of artwork. Original artwork combined black & white photocopy with spirit-based marker and pastel pencil.

Timex - Animated Cases

This visual is one of a series that illustrated initial concepts for a proposed Ingersol/Timex museum in the United States of America. See: 127-129, 131-133, and 174.

The idea that displays in showcases could be animated, that they need not be static, in the sense that traditional museum artefact displays are static, provided the impetus for this visual. It suggests that turning rollers, wheels or 'clockwork' cogs could be used to create displays that move inside the glass enclosure or whole showcases that move. Potter is fully aware of the reservations that a curator or conservator might have about such an idea. But it is important to understand that, at this early stage in a project,

broad ideas are being used to engage the client in thinking about the creative direction the project should take. The detail of specific exhibits, their form and placing in the narrative, the resolution of technical problems, etc, is much further down the line.

The concept here is that the 'large cog-like display case...is turning and exposing different styles of watches in each case...almost like a praxinoscope.' The left-hand side of the visual shows an elevation and the right-hand side a plan. The visual is probably a montage of two illustrations. The figure was drawn by Bob Harvey and Potter produced the pastel rendered drawing.



131

Bob Harvey

29 x 41cm
Not signed or dated
Not mounted or framed

Brief Description:

Man and woman standing in front of showcase containing alarm clocks and one sleeping and one awakened figure. Text at centre bottom of image: 'WAKE UP 1960s'. Predominantly worked in browns, blues and reds.

Media

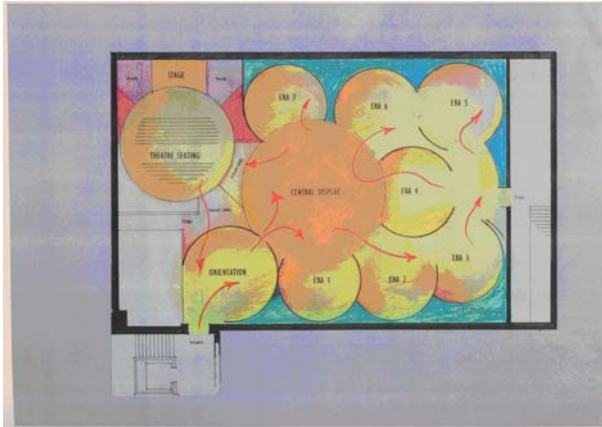
Colour photocopy of artwork. Original artwork in pen, spirit-based marker, pencil crayon, possibly with some touches of gouache.

Timex - Wake up 1960s

This Bob Harvey' illustration belongs to the series that illustrated an initial concept for a proposed Ingersol/Timex museum in the United States of America. See: 127-130, 132, 133, and 174.

It shows a concept for displaying different styles of alarms clocks. The text 'wake up 1960s' indicates that the collection could be

organized into decades, each display with its own by-line and expressive form to evoke an idea of period. The approach here demonstrates well the wit that characterizes Potter's approach and which other designers came to recognize and respect. Potter recalls that it was Robin Wade, the lauded independent museum designer, who recommended him to the client's representative.



Neal Potter

29 x 41cm

Not signed or dated

Not mounted or framed

Brief Description:

Design of floor plan.

Room is sectioned by circular areas nominated:

ORIENTATION,

CENTRAL DISPLAY,

ERA 1, ERA 2, ERA

3, etc, THEATRE

SEATING, and STAGE.

Predominantly worked in

yellows, oranges, greens and reds on lilac background.

Media

Colour photocopy of artwork. Original artwork in pen, spirit-based marker and pastel pencil.

Timex - Spatial Organization

This visual is one of a series produced late 1993 early 1994 for a proposed Timex museum in the USA. See: 127-131, 133 and 174.

Potter created this diagrammatic floor plan to show how the Timex story might be organized in space. The sketch was produced for a small fee early in the concept design process. The purpose was to provide the agent with a taster to show the client whom Potter had never met. The communication did continue for a while, and long enough for Potter to elaborate a range of visual concepts for the museum proposal and to produce the A4 presentation document referred to above. See: 127.

The proposal was never turned down; the client simply ceased communication and the project disappeared from view. This was not an uncommon experience for Potter, and indeed for

other exhibition and museum designers. Sometimes clients would discover that they didn't have the budget to realize their expectations of the exhibition. Sometimes they would decide to take their project in a different direction, for example, by donating a collection to an existing museum.

The original drawing was rendered in pastel pencil. This was one of Potter's favoured drawing media in the days before the desktop computer equipped with Adobe Photoshop software made the smooth blending of colour a simple effect to achieve. The drawing was colour photocopied, which further enhanced the vibrancy of the colour and made it clean to handle. When photo reduced the image also became crisper and melded well into the page layout of the presentation document.



133

Bob Harvey (cut out and mounted by Potter)

29 x 41cm
Not signed or dated
Not mounted or framed

Brief Description:

Three figures standing before a showcase containing outstretched arms. Predominantly worked in greens, browns, blues and yellow. Text top of image: 'GUESS WHO?'

Media

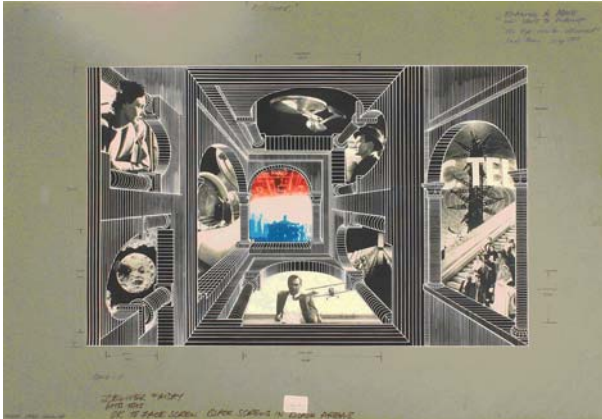
Colour photocopy of artwork. Original artwork in pen and spirit-based marker on paper, cut out and mounted on grey tinted board.

Timex - *Repulsion*

This Bob Harvey drawing belongs to the series that illustrated a presentation document prepared by Potter (c.1990) for a proposed Timex museum in the USA. See: 127-132, and 174.

Inspired by the Surrealist film *Repulsion*, the visual shows different wristwatches on the disembodied arms of various characters drawn from popular cartoon comics and films.

134



Bill Akeman and Neal
Potter

56.5 x 82cm
Signed and dated July 1988
Not framed

Brief Description:

Black and white design with red and blue centre panel. Image features a series of arched windows and columns in the style of Escher. Each window displays a black and white photograph. Design is mounted on grey board, which is annotated in ink by two different hands.

Media

Collage, paper and photographic prints on tinted board.

Escher

This image, inspired by the work of M C Escher, was designed to go over the entrance to the Museum of the Moving Image. The technical illustration was drawn at approximately A3 size by Bill Akeman, a graphic designer Potter had first met and worked with at the DTI and with whom he had then maintained a valuable professional relationship.

The idea behind the exhibit was to give a quick overview of the characters and the images that the visitor might meet inside the museum. It also made a visual link with the first theme of the exhibition, which dealt with persistence of vision, visual illusions, and how eye and brain can be deceived.

The original artwork was a montage of filmic images mounted behind cut-out windows in the line illustration. The item in the collection is a photographic print slightly enlarged from the original artwork. It was produced by Carlton Fox, the contractor for the exhibition graphics, as a document to gain designer's approval for the proposed manufacturing and installation process and was signed and dated by Potter soon after receipt.

The finished exhibit was approximately 3 metres high by 5 metres wide and was mounted at the entrance to the museum over the staircase to the undercroft. It was manufactured as black and white photographic prints mounted, probably on duo-faced hardboard, and screwed to the wall through the surface of the print.



135

Neal Potter

74.5 x 50cm
Not signed or dated
Not framed

Brief Description:

FRONT: Stage set design with figure in front of several pop culture images. Seated audience. Foreground has newspaper cuttings and '92 Sevilla logo. BACK: Inscription: Theatre Show. British Pavilion. Also printout of exhibition showing several screens with male figure centre stage.

Media

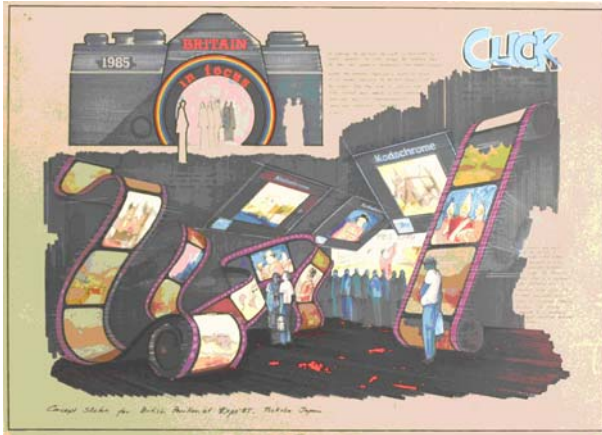
Paper, pastel pencil and collage of printed ephemera and photograph.

Expo '92 Theatre Show

Potter designed the exhibition and theatre show for the British pavilion at Expo '92 in Seville. This visual shows the proposal for the multimedia theatre show at the centre of the exhibition. It is not a concept drawing; it was produced quite late in the design process when the detailed features of the show were decided. For example, the heart and the stage effects are rendered accurately and therefore clearly relate to the production phase of the project.

Reviews of the show cut from newspapers and a photograph of the show were added to the presentation board at a later date. The composite work was hung in Potter's studio as decoration for some time following completion of the project.

The reverse shows additional images that more fully describe the dynamic of the stage show.



136

Neal Potter

54 x 74.5cm

Unframed

Signed and dated 1984

Brief Description:

Greyboard with annotated design featuring oversized film strips, transparencies and camera. Predominantly worked in blacks, blues, lilacs and reds.

Reverse inscribed: 'Concept sketch for British Pavilion Expo '85 Tsukuba. 1st of a series of visuals that changed my career'.

Media

Spirit-based marker, gouache and collage.

Britain in Focus

For Potter this visual represents 'the start of the big time'. By 1984 he was well established at the British government's Central Office of Information (COI), having completed exhibits throughout the UK and abroad for a wide variety of governmental organizations. Potter was initially assigned as assistant designer for the British pavilion exhibition for Expo '85 in Tsukuba, Japan. This was the first of a series of visuals that captured the sense of scale and theatre that the COI management were looking for and eventually gained him the job as lead designer. See: 140 and 184-7.

The theme represented in this visual, 'Britain in Focus', was developed to introduce Britain to the rest of the world in an exciting way. The giant camera and film-strip forms express the idea in three-dimensions and provide a means of presenting images and animating the interior. Film-strip images would be static; and those in the Kodachrome transparency frames would be back-projected

moving images. The large golf image at the back of the exhibit was conceived as an animated postcard and was inspired by the title sequence of *The South Bank Show*, an arts and culture magazine programme popular at the time on British television. The forms were to be fabricated using Lucobond, a Swiss-made composite material of aluminium sheet with a neoprene core, which Potter had used on an earlier exhibition about the history of the factory inspector.

The big idea is characteristic of Potter's approach to concept design. Although this exhibit concept was not built, it served its purpose in demonstrating the potential for creating the right atmosphere to communicate the British message. The visual was drawn using Magic Marker pens and gouache. Parts of the visual look over-worked; the floor area for example was probably painted over with body colour to hide a mistake.



137

Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm

Signed

Not mounted or framed



Brief Description:

Drawing of figure in front of 10 Downing Street. Annotated. Back inscription: 'Original drawing'. Also includes Neal Potter's address. Predominantly worked in black and greys.

Media

Pencil and spirit-based marker pen.

176

29.5 x 21cm

Not signed

Not mounted or framed

TV and Politics

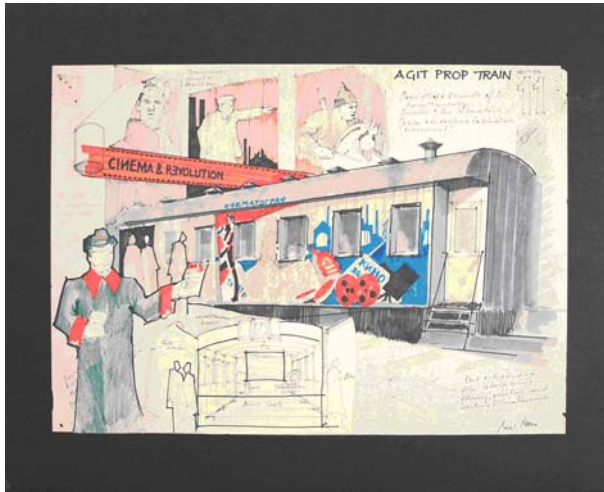
This was one of many visuals Potter produced in the early days of the Museum of the Moving Image project. They were Potter's initial creative response to titles such as 'Politics and Film', 'Politics and Television', etc, that appeared in the intellectual master plan, the written document put together by the researchers on the project.

They were all done very quickly - about 15 minutes each. The initial pencil sketch on layout paper was simply worked over with Magic Markers. This was a way of getting ideas into production meetings very quickly for three-way discussion between the managers, Leslie Hardcastle and David Francis, the researchers, David Watson and Liz Heasman, and the designer.

This visual was probably drawn in 1986, possibly early 1987. The exhibit was to show how the succession of Prime Ministers, from Harold Macmillan to Margaret Thatcher, developed different styles of presentation on television. It uses what was a relatively new technology at the time, the video wall. The vertical stack of five screens is a non-standard format adopted to make best use of the visual impact of the No. 10 Downing Street doorway concept. The exhibit was built although without the bracketed top.

176 is a colour photocopy of 137 on white glossy card. It does not have the heading and signature, which may, therefore, have been added to 137 a later date.

138



Neal Potter (with
annotation by Liz
Heasman)

29.5 x 42cm
Signed and dated 1986.
Not framed

Brief Description:

Train carriage to centre
of design. Plan of train
interior in foreground as
well as guardsman figure.
Annotated. Predominantly
worked in blues, greens,
reds and black.

Media

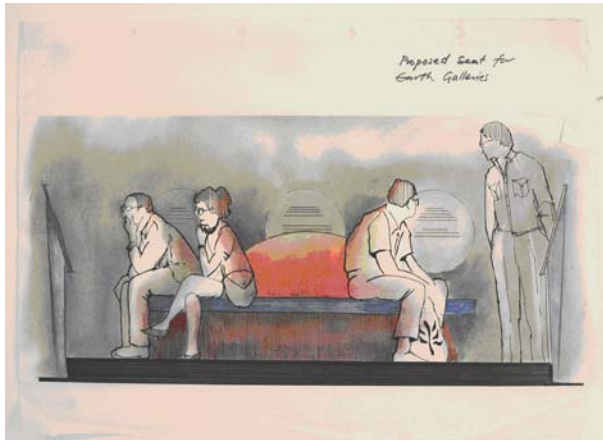
Pencil, collage, and spirit-
based marker pen.

Agitprop Train

This was almost certainly the first visual Potter produced for the Museum of the Moving Image project. It is dated 21 November 1986, just a few days after he arrived on the site to start work.

It is a montage of two drawings done to keep the idea on one sheet. The sketch of the carriage interior has been cut from another sheet and glued to this one below the drawing of the exterior. It is very

much a working drawing. The number '11' in the top right-hand corner refers to that section in the researchers' intellectual master plan. Potter was just starting to work with the researchers and he asked Heasman to write the notes as way of getting them involved. The drawing was one of several that were displayed in the design studio as a creative marker for the project; this explains why it has several pin holes and has faded more than some other drawings.



139

Neal Potter

29.5 x 42cm
Not framed

Brief Description:

Bench seat with one standing and three seated figures. Predominantly worked in greys, reds and blues.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen and watercolour.

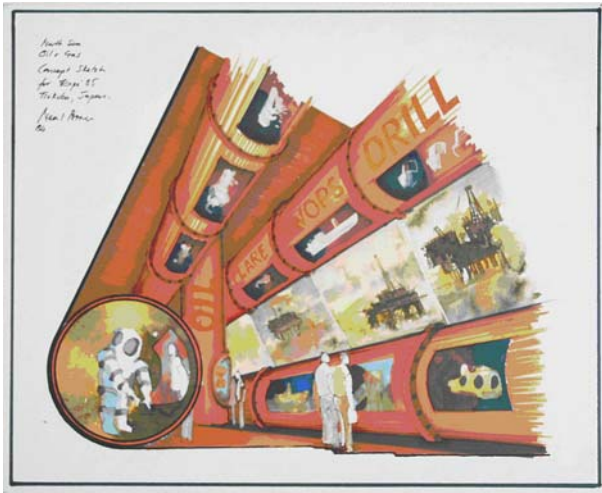
Seating for Earth Gallery Atrium

Neal Potter designed the entrance exhibit for the Earth Galleries at the Natural History Museum, London. This visual shows an idea for seating in the space underneath the giant globe and escalator and was something of an afterthought.

It was inspired by the image of Saturn and its rings. The exhibit

was not built because it would have reduced space available for corporate hire, a significant consideration for a national museum in a prime location in the West End of London.

Unusually for Potter the drawing combines watercolour wash with the typical Magic Marker rendering of an initial pencil sketch.



140

Neal Potter

44 x 54cm
Not framed

Brief Description:

Design with large pipes displaying exhibits. Detail of diver to right of image. Several standing figures view the exhibits.

Media

Pencil, spirit-based marker pen, pen, watercolour and gouache.

North Sea Oil and Gas

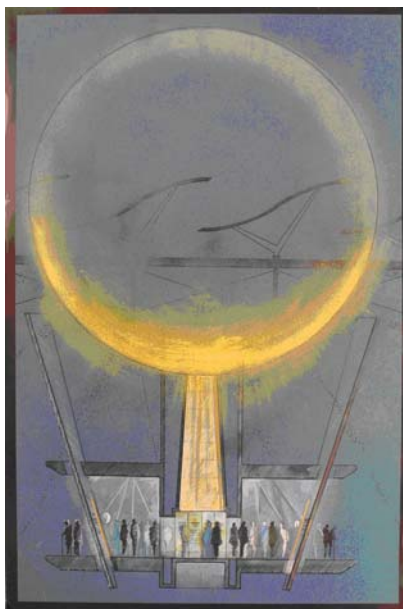
This is one of a series of visuals produced for the design of the British pavilion at Expo '85 in Tsukuba, Japan. See 136 and 184-7. The exhibit focuses on Britain's involvement in North Sea exploration and uses giant pipes to express the theme and frame images and three-dimensional displays. The purpose of the visual is to communicate the scale and dramatic potential of the Expo exhibit and was done early in the design process as a means of engaging potential sponsors; it would have been shown to BP or Shell.

The roundel to the lower left of the visual represents the open end of a pipe and shows a deep-sea diving suit display. The photographic images were to be back-lit transparencies and back-projected moving images. With this visual content Potter was trying to recapture the mood of a contemporary advertising

campaign, probably for Shell, which used lighting effects on sky and sea reminiscent of JMW Turner's paintings.

An outline perspective in pencil was worked up in Magic Marker with small areas of watercolour and some over painting in gouache. Although slightly odd, the choice of perspective angle is deliberate to show the showcase interior; the line to the top left exaggerates the effect by not projecting from the dominant vanishing point. Potter is generally careful to draw things that suggest something buildable. The slight distortion here is justified by the clarity and persuasiveness of the concept it communicates.

The visual was greatly admired at the COI, but it was not built. Had the idea been accepted by a sponsor it could have been the starting point for the design of the whole pavilion.



141

Neal Potter

75 x 55cm
Not signed
Mounted on board
Not framed

Brief Description:

Line drawing on tinted paper of a section through a building with a crowd of small figures, large image of the sun drawn over the top. Predominantly rendered in grey, white and yellow.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen and pastel pencil.

Expo '92 Quadrascope

This visual shows a quadrascope in section and the position of the visual illusion it would create. It was created for the British pavilion at Expo '92, Seville. BP provided all of the solar cells on the roof of the building and this contribution needed to be acknowledged somewhere within the exhibition. Rather than a discreet graphic panel tucked away in a corner, Potter proposed this gigantic image of the sun radiating light down on the display area. The exhibit was built, at considerable expense, but was not completely successful; the illusion was excellent but unfortunately people tend not to look up into narrow overhead spaces.

Potter had first incorporated the quadrascope into an exhibition at the Museum of the Moving Image (1988). In 1990 he devised the largest quadrascope in the world as the main focal point at the end

of the Ecology gallery at the Natural History Museum, London. Following its use at Expo '92 Potter received many requests for similar exhibits, such is the simplicity and power of the illusion it creates. Four mirrors are fixed edge to edge to form a tapering square tube. When one looks into the wider end of the tube the illusion of a giant sphere appears as a result of multiple reflections of whatever is placed across the narrow end. For reasons connected with patent rights Potter was obliged to engage a company called 'Brilliant Adventures' on the technical realization of all of these quadrascope exhibits.

Potter rendered the pen line and Magic Marker drawing with pastel pencil, a favourite medium for visualizing lighting effects.



142

Neal Potter

29 x 42cm

Signed and dated 1989

Not framed

Brief Description:

Crowd in the foreground looking up to a structure of bubbles with a rectangular screen behind. Predominantly rendered in greys and blues.

Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker.

3-D Cell Theatre

This quick concept visual, dated 1989, was drawn in Magic Marker on layout paper for a project on medical science at the Wellcome Trust. It represents a somewhat content-free idea for a three-dimensional theatre presentation on cells. It was inspired by a computer-generated image of a water molecule which was 'left over' from the Expo '85 project Potter had worked on five years earlier, but it is the kind of visual Potter hates having to produce.

When producing exhibit concepts Potter likes to be responding to rich information about the proposed content of an exhibition. For Potter the heart of an exhibition project is the need to

communicate ideas to an audience. If this rationale is missing the designer is likely to produce tantalizing images that simply pander to a client's ego. In Potter's own words 'I think a lot of people win jobs on bullshit ideas that can never be built and never will be built...clients that employ people on an unpaid pitch, in particular, without giving them a good brief...deserve what they get.'

Potter did not win this particular job; however, he has realized versions of this three-dimensional theatre concept in temporary exhibitions in Singapore.

143



Neal Potter

75 x 55cm
Signed

Brief Description:

Two children and one adult male figure in the foreground, adult group in the middle distance on a walkway. Sloping walls meeting overhead displaying images of cartoon characters. Bugs Bunny image featured on the triangular end wall. Predominantly rendered in mauve and green.

Media

Pen, spirit-based marker pen, collage and gouache.

Bugs Bunny

In 1995 the British Film Institute planned an exhibition to celebrate 100 years of cinema. Potter visited the proposed site in the Royal Docks with Leslie Hardcastle, film historian David Robinson and Will Stephenson, then director of the BFI. This is one of a set of visuals Potter produced in response to that meeting. See: 189.

The concept is a giant walk-through kaleidoscope around which back-projected images of Warner Brothers and Disney cartoon characters would be bounced. It would have created a very immersive environment. Fund raising efforts failed and the project was dropped.



Neal Potter (with element
by Bob Harvey)

51 x 76cm
Not mounted

Brief Description:

Two images drawn in elevation. On the left a roundel containing a matrix of image fragments. On the right a roundel containing a poem. Identical figures of a child and a woman are positioned to the left of each image.

Media

Photoprint of digital image.
Original figure drawing in pen
and spirit-based marker.

'Earth's Treasury' and 'The Earth Today and Tomorrow'

This computer generated visual is one of a series produced about two years after Potter had completed the Earth Galleries Atrium project at the Natural History Museum, London. The museum had no effective orientational exhibit in the linking space between the Earth Galleries, formerly the Geological Museum, and the Life Galleries. Potter was asked to provide ideas for a 'contents page' to the Earth Galleries. See: 145, 179, 180, and 192-199. Although the exhibit was never built the drawings provide an insight into how Potter exploited a new medium for visualizing design concepts.

The concept here was a set of overlapping shallow cylindrical exhibits mounted like a globes on a plinth. Each backlit graphic highlighted a different gallery theme. This visual features two:

'Earth's Treasury' and 'The Earth Today and Tomorrow'. The latter features a poem chosen by Potter for the way it 'seemed to sum up people's reaction to the earth today'.

In the late '90s Potter's studio had expanded to include two other salaried designers, both fresh from university, Alison Stapley and Joanna Jarvis. There was a move to work less in pens and paint and more in digital techniques. This series of rendered elevation views represents one of the more successful approaches to the use of the computer. The image was montaged together using Adobe Photoshop software. The figures were drawn by Bob Harvey and taken from an earlier illustration. The detailed image content was a mixture of blurred fragments of scanned images and digitally drawn elements suggesting the overall effect.



145

Neal Potter (with element
by Bob Harvey)

51 x 76cm
Not mounted

Brief Description:

Two images drawn in elevation. On the left a roundel containing a stylized image of housing and river. On the right a section showing the earth's core. Identical figures of a child and a woman are positioned to the left of each image.

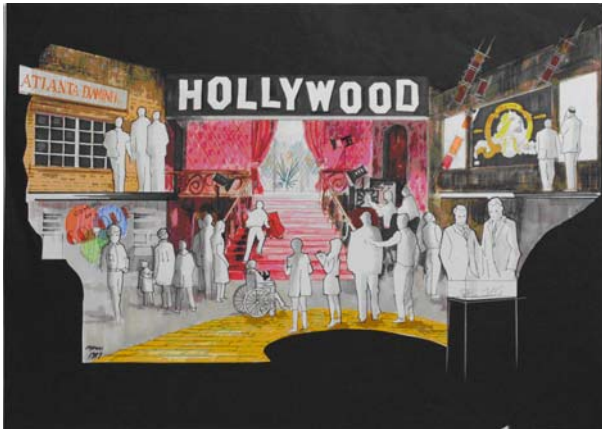
Media

Photoprint of digital image.
Original figure drawing in pen
and spirit-based marker.

'Visions of Earth' and 'The Power Within'

This visual is another in the series that shows an orientation exhibit for the Earth Galleries at the Natural History Museum, London. See: 144, 179, 180 and 192-199. The galleries to which these two designs relate were 'Visions of Earth', the exhibit in the atrium designed by Potter two years earlier, and 'The Power Within', which was the gallery at the top of the escalator on the right.

The image on the left was inspired by a 12th century map. It features a detail of Bethlehem and was chosen to communicate the idea that the world was seen very differently in earlier times.



146

Neal Potter

42 x 59.5cm

Unframed

Not signed but inscribed:
MOMI 1987

Brief Description:

Silhouettes of people set against a background with a crimson central staircase. Elevated side panel to the left of design has a window with 'Atlanta Examiner' board set above a window. Elevated right side panel shows a cartouche with a lion. Yellow paved road appears in foreground.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen, crayon on white paper pasted onto black lining paper.

Atlanta Examiner, Hollywood set

This visual shows part of the 'Hollywood set' for the Museum of the Moving Image. It was produced quite late in the design process but is by no means the finished design. By mid-way in the project the idea that an actor could be both interpreter and security guard was well established in the design and Potter was trying to create theatrical sets on which the actors could perform. The staircase was taken from *Gone with the Wind* and would have been the centrepiece. In the foreground one can also see the 'Yellow Brick Road' taken from *The Wizard of Oz*, which was an idea for wayfinding in the museum.

In the final design the Hollywood sign was painted on the underside of Waterloo Bridge, i.e. the ceiling, and a 'Saloon' scene, that could work on one floor level, was used rather than the staircase.

The visual started as an outline pencil drawing worked up in pen and Magic Marker on layout paper. This was cut out and mounted on black lining paper and worked over in crayon. Potter's tendency to 'overwork' some visuals is apparent in this example. It does, however, demonstrate how a drawing can be 'rescued' to form a very effective piece of design communication.



147

Neal Potter

53 x 81cm
Unframed
Not signed. Inscribed:
'MOMI 87'

Brief Description:

Odeon cinema entrance at centre back. A silhouette of doorman and queue of people line a façade of glass doors. Ceiling has 'Hollyw[ood]' wording and supports several suspended stage lights. Right and left hand side panels have silhouettes of people flanking gridded façades. Foreground shows three people, one centrally positioned; two at right behind a raised dais labelled 'ART DEPT'.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker, pencil crayon and pastel pencil on blue tinted board.

Hollywood - Odeon

This visual of the Hollywood set at the Museum of the Moving Image is even later than 146. The concept relies on associating the idea of 'glamour' with cinema-going and of 'the factory' with the Hollywood studios. All of the Hollywood set is now treated as a working studio, with the different departments coming together to 'manufacture' movies. The Saloon set, which eventually took up the space to the left of the Odeon, is still not in place. However, the Hollywood sign has moved onto the ceiling (the underside of Waterloo Bridge) and the Odeon frontage with the doors, fascia and projection screen above is quite accurately described. The latter was based on the Leicester Square Odeon and the company gave permission for the neon sign and logo to be used. A great deal of research went into the promotional lettering on the fascia. It is

notable that Clare Trevor gets the headline in the announcement of *Stagecoach* because in 1939 John Wayne was a young unknown. The space was also designed to be hired out for events. It was not unusual for the names to be reversed when the lettering was replaced after 'Welcome to Barclays Bank' or 'Happy Birthday Harry' had served its corporate purpose.

The initial pencil drawing on board was rendered in Magic Markers and then worked over with white pencil crayon, pastel pencil and coloured pencil crayons. Potter still occasionally used gouache when he needed to block part of a drawing out to work over the top. Visuals at this stage were produced to photograph and reproduce well in print.



148

Neal Potter

53 x 57cm
Not framed
Not signed. Inscribed
'MOMI 1987'

Brief Description:

Crimson staircase with 3 yellow handrails leading to a glass fronted façade with 'NEAL POTTER 38' and several Charlie Chaplin posters above. Ceiling panel has 20 black and white portraits of individuals and is supported on tall columns surmounted by statues of early cinema figures. Lining the staircase on the left is a classic film poster. An elevated walkway is also detailed to the left of the staircase.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen, paper collage, gouache and pencil crayon.

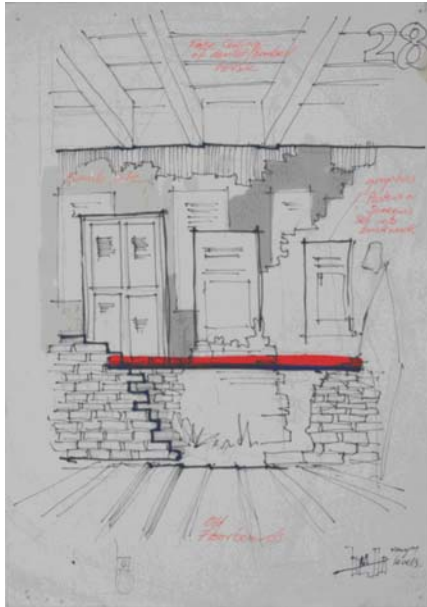
Temple to the Gods (of Silent Cinema)

This visual shows the 'Temple to the Gods', which was one of the iconic exhibits in the Museum of the Moving Image. The exhibit concept tackles two key problems, drawing attention to the special significance of the star system in Hollywood in the era of silent movies and integrating the change of level from undercroft to main deck into the exhibition.

Images on the ceiling place members of the MOMI team in amongst the stars of early cinema. This 'in joke' was very much spurred on by Leslie Hardcastle's sense of humour. From left to right, top row, Janet Corbett, David Francis, Leslie Hardcastle, second row: David Watson, three film stars, and Neal Potter, third row: Frank Corten, three film stars, the general secretary, and another star, bottom row Liz Heasman and five period film stars.

The drawing is worked up from an outline perspective in pencil on board. It is rendered in Magic Marker pen. Some areas, such as the columns, have been blocked out in gouache. Collaged elements of black and white photocopy image provide graphic detail. Finishing touches are in white crayon and pen.

Most designers keep very little original design material from projects. Through sheer pressure on space Potter admits to having had several big clearouts in his studio over the years. MOMI's chief researcher, Liz Heasman, saved the only card model of the Hollywood area with the Odeon frontage.



149

Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm
Not signed

Brief Description:

Image shows fragments of wall and upright doors behind. A silhouette stands to the right. The ceiling and foreground feature exposed beams and floorboards. Annotated mainly in red ink. Thumbnail sketched motif at the bottom right and a large '28' at the top right of the design. Pencil sketched motif appears at bottom left of design.

Media

Pencil, spirit-based marker and red pen.

Cinema Goes to War

This sketch concept visual, from the early days of the Museum of the Moving Image project, refers to section 28, 'Cinema Goes to War', in the intellectual master plan produced by the researchers. The purpose was to show alternative scales for exhibit work and to create atmosphere. It is a pencil sketch quickly firmed up in Magic Marker, notes were added in red pen at the same time or perhaps at the meeting at which it was first discussed.

The set evoked the idea of a bombed-out house of which only fragments of wall and a few doors and panels are left standing.

These carry posters, video screens and printed graphics. There is a thumbnail sketch section bottom right of the sheet suggesting forced perspective to exaggerate the depth of the exhibit or perhaps a ramp through the middle of the exhibit. This concept was not used. The exhibit eventually developed into a major audiovisual show realized in the Odeon area of the museum as a multi-screen tape-slide show. This was probably one of the last times this technology was used in a major museum because laser-disk technology had already become available.



150

Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm
Not signed
Not framed

Brief Description:

Image shows circular room set with central waist-height plinth displaying object. Circular ceiling appears as a compass rose and fascia carries the title 'COLD WAR'. The curved block wall has seven small openings into which two figures are peering. Annotated in red with '29' in black at the top right.

Media

Pencil, spirit based marker and red pen.

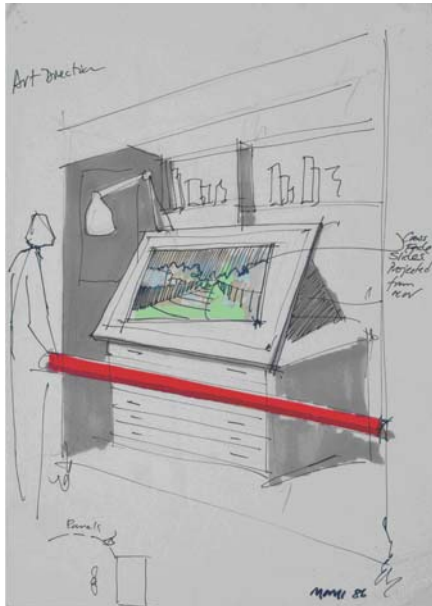
Cold War Cinema

This sketch concept visual is particularly interesting because it relates to the only theme in the intellectual master plan for the Museum of the Moving Image that never appeared in the exhibition. So many stories and themes were crammed into the limited space that 'Cold War Cinema' had to be left out.

The concept was a very simple one. Beneath a compass rose, suggesting an East-West divide, was a barbed-wire-topped circle of (Berlin) wall. Photographs and fragments of Cold War cinema could be seen through peep holes in the wall. The centre of the space would have a display of appropriate artefacts. What these were would not have been decided this early in the project.

The real interest in this sketch, however, is that it carries the genes of the exhibitry in the National Cold War Exhibition at the

Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford, a project Potter started some sixteen years later in January 2003. Potter is often concerned at the beginning of a project to find an appropriate overarching concept for exhibition infrastructure, one that can adapt to changing ideas of detailed content whilst retaining its identity and function. The project at Cosford involved displaying a collection of mainly post-war military aircraft. Even adding one more or making small changes in their relative positions would have a major impact on distribution and shape of space available for interpretive or storytelling exhibitry. Potter eliminated this issue by creating 'hot spots', cylindrical enclosures with multimedia capabilities, whose positions in the open-plan museum could easily be adjusted without affecting the coherence of the exhibition. This is exhibition design as a game of 'chess'.



151

Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm
Unsigned. Inscribed:
'MOMI 86'
Not framed

Brief Description:

A tilted drawing board is mounted on a plan chest in an alcove with bookshelves along the back wall and a red barrier across the front. A back-projected image appears on the board. One male figure in the foreground. Annotated in black, headed 'Art Direction'. Thumbnail sketch plan bottom left.

Media

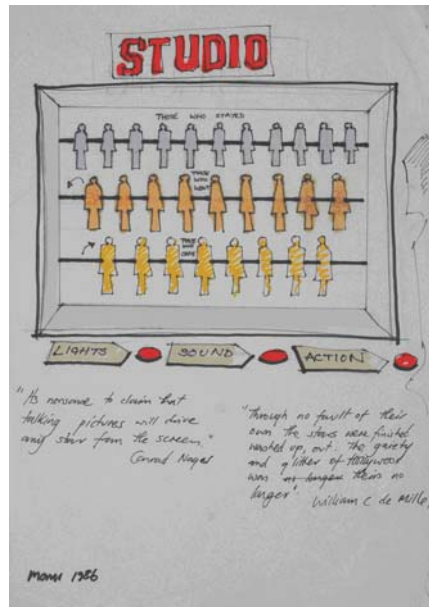
Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Art Direction

This sketch concept visual for an 'Art Direction' exhibit was produced within the first six weeks of Potter joining the Museum of the Moving Image project. The plan chest would have housed projectors for 'cross-fade slides'. The idea was to bring the studio to life by telling a simple story in moving images.

As with other visuals of the period it was a spontaneous creative response to something in the intellectual master plan produced by MOMI researchers. A pencil sketch was quickly rendered with Magic Markers and taken to a production meeting to stimulate discussion and help Potter to move the design process on.

152



Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm

Not signed. Inscribed:

'MOMI 1986'

Not framed

Brief Description:

A recessed window with title 'STUDIO' above houses three rows of stylised figures mounted onto rods. Below the window are three red buttons, labelled from left to right: 'LIGHTS, SOUND, ACTION'. Two handwritten quotations are added below the design.

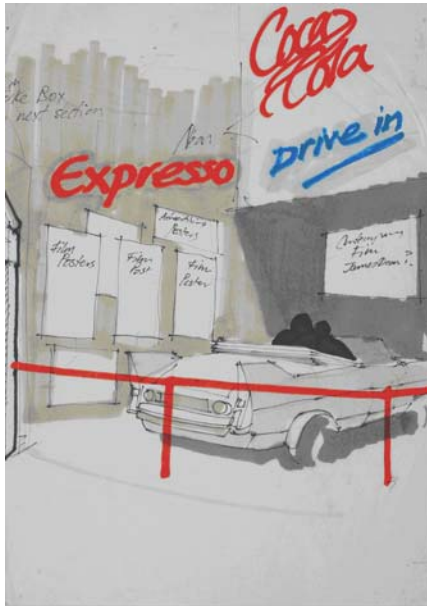
Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Studio Interactive

This sketch concept visual was produced very early in the Museum of the Moving Image project. It describes an interactive exhibit on the theme of the coming of sound to cinema. It would have been a simple exhibit, i.e., press a button and see what happened to the stars when sound arrived. Some fell by the wayside, some stayed and new stars emerged.

It was inspired by arcade games such as table football. Computer software to achieve this was not available at this time so it would have been an electro-mechanical exhibit using audio tape. The drawing is a pencil sketch quickly rendered in Magic Markers.



153

Neal Potter

30 x 21cm
Not signed
Not framed

Brief Description:

The exhibit features a convertible car with roof down parked underneath a sign 'COCA COLA Drive in'. 'Expresso' appears above blank posters on the left side wall. A red barrier is drawn across the front of the exhibit. Annotated in black.

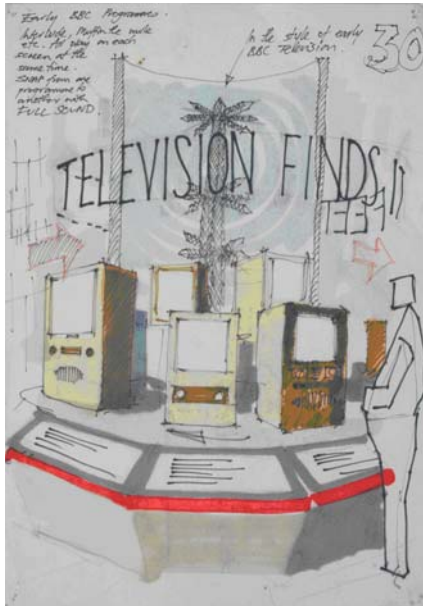
Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Expresso - Youth Culture

This sketch concept visual is another very early one from the Museum of the Moving Image project. The theme from the intellectual master plan to which Potter was responding was 'Youth Culture'. It was something he returned to several times before finding a workable concept.

This concept tries to express the idea through iconic imagery of 1950s America: convertible finned Chevrolet-type cars, drive-in movies, period film posters, expresso coffee, Coca Cola and neon signs. It did not progress very far but when seen together with subsequent ideas (160 and 175) provides an insight into the exploratory nature of the design process.



154

Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm
Not signed
Not framed

Brief Description:

An island exhibit with several television sets on a turntable on a table height plinth. In the centre is an image of a transmitter mast with wraparound title 'TELEVISION FINDS IT[s] FEET'. One figure to the right of the exhibit. Annotated in black and red pen, large '30' in the top right corner.

Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker.

Television Finds its Feet

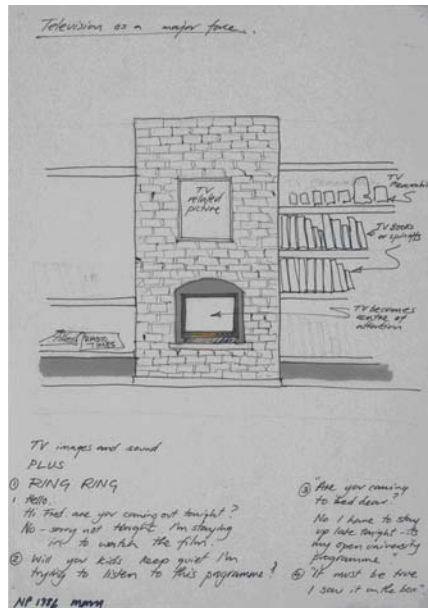
This early sketch concept visual for the Museum of the Moving Image was an initial creative response to section 30 in the intellectual master plan. The theme, 'Television Finds its Feet', follows on from 'The Coming of Television' See: 177.

At the beginning of the project production meetings could be rather strange. The team met formally every week on Wednesday evening and all day Thursday and would often continue late into the night. The business was to create the components of a great exhibition through creative dialogue; this preceded any idea of an exhibition master plan. David Francis and David Robinson were both great collectors of cinema ephemera and liked these drawings so much that they bid against each other to buy them.

This exhibit concept is a simple one: counter rotating elements

express the idea of parading the landmarks of 1950s television programming that established the medium in the popular imagination. A collection of period television sets is displayed on a turntable each one with a different programme playing on a loop. Overhead, the title would rotate around the image of a transmitter mast, which was very much the contemporary symbol of BBC Television.

Although visually a straightforward exhibit, technically it would have been very difficult to achieve. Electrosonic did find out how to pass a video signal reliably through a turntable, although the technique was not used to realize this exhibit but a later one commissioned from the artist Nam June Paik. The 'Television Finds its Feet' exhibit evolved in a different way. The visual is a quick pen and Magic Marker rendering of an initial pencil sketch.



155

Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm
Initialled 'NP' and
inscribed: '1986 MOMI'
Not framed

Brief Description:

A domestic interior wall with central brick section housing a television with a picture above. Shelving either side displays TV related books, magazines and other objects.

Annotated. Handwritten text below the drawing includes a possible audio content.

Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Television as a Major Force

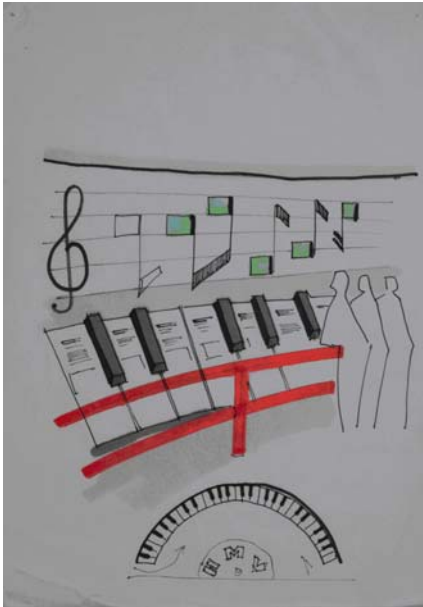
This simple sketch elevation explains a concept for an exhibit on television as a major force in the home. Potter produced the drawing some time in his first few weeks at the Museum of the Moving Image.

It shows a home setting where the television has replaced the fireplace as the focal point of the living room. There would be TV-related ephemera throughout the room, the picture above the fireplace, memorabilia, TV-related books on the shelves and things such as the *Radio Times* scattered around. There would also have been an audio track illustrating changing behavioural patterns. The annotations read: 1. 'Ring ring ...Hi, Fred are you coming

out tonight? ...No - sorry not tonight I'm staying in to watch the film.' 2. 'Will you kids keep quiet I'm trying to listen to this programme.' 3. 'Are you coming to bed dear? No, I have to stay up late; it's my Open University programme.' 4. 'It must be true, I saw it on the box.'

The content would have developed further to show how the natural world was brought into everyone's living room, how we very quickly expected outside broadcasts in the '50s, which were initially great technical feats, how, in the early '60s, the Telstar and Earlybird satellites bounced live images across the Atlantic, and in no time all how we were watching moon walks live on TV.

156



Neal Potter

29.5 x 21cm
Not signed
Not framed

Brief Description:

Curved wall space featuring oversized music stave and keyboard. Graphic content is indicated on the white keys. Three figures lean against a red barrier in front of the exhibit. There is a sketch plan at the bottom of the page.

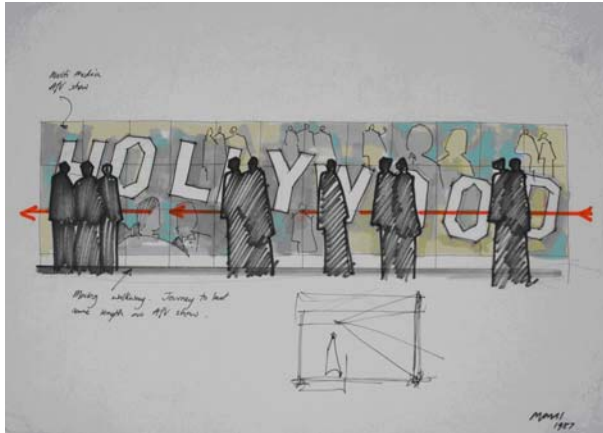
Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Musicals

The intellectual master plan for the Museum of the Moving Image originally suggested a section on film musicals. This sketch concept visual was Potter's initial creative response to this proposition. It uses the iconography of the music stave and a giant keyboard as a vehicle to carry graphics. The sketch plan below the perspective view indicates a discreet space with a freestanding element in the centre; the 'H M V' lettering suggests a connection with vinyl or shellac music disks.

As with all of Potter's thinking at this early stage in the project the emphasis was on creating a theatrical character to the exhibits, to develop a kind of exhibition language and to engage the team of managers and researchers in the process. The exhibit was not realized. Eventually the theme was dealt with as a genre in the Hollywood set.



157

Neal Potter

30 x 42cm

Not signed but inscribed:

'MOMI 1987'

Not framed

Brief Description:

Wall exhibit with a gridded screen illustrating several images of people and 'HOLLYWOOD' in bold white lettering. A red arrow spans the design. Groups of onlookers stand in front of the wall. Annotated in black ink. A sketch section appears below the drawing.

Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Hollywood Walk

This sketch elevation drawing shows the sort of designer Potter thought he was when he arrived at the Museum of the Moving Image: he was still in 'World Fair mode'. It shows a travolator taking people on a journey through Hollywood with a multiscreen, multimedia show behind. The concept was to immerse visitors in imagery, a kind of virtual reality before virtual reality.

Although this concept was never used – it needed too much space and too big a budget – the creative process here is interesting:

it involves exploring possibilities, getting into conversations, questioning the norms of museum design, pushing the boundaries and discovering what the resources available really can do. It is designing as a form of research.

Like the other early concept visuals for this project this one was sketched in pencil then quickly rendered in pen and Magic Marker. The thumbnail section below the drawing may have been added during the production meeting at which the concept was discussed.



158

Neal Potter

30 x 42cm
Not signed. Inscribed:
'MOMI 86'
Not framed

Brief Description:

The façade of a temple style building with four caryatids supporting a triangular pediment with the title 'FACES OF THE WORLD'. Head and shoulder silhouettes appear on the pediment and in a series of three rows on the façade. Two figures in the foreground, front right. Annotated in blue ballpoint.

Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Faces for the World

This sketch concept visual, dated 1986, shows possibly the earliest version of what became one of the iconic exhibits at the Museum of the Moving Image. In the silent movie era there was no language barrier: it was a form of communication that crossed all borders. Consequently the first movie stars were worshipped worldwide. This explains the double title of this exhibit 'Faces for the World' and 'Temple to the Gods (of the Silent Cinema)', the latter originally suggested by David Francis.

Francis was film critic on the *Times* newspaper, avid collector

and film historian and, in Potter's words, 'the real brains behind the interpretation at MOMI.' At this stage in the project the core team, Leslie Hardcastle, David Robins, Francis and Potter were trying to bring the research to life. An initial pencil sketch was quickly rendered in pen and Magic Marker and taken to a production meeting. Potter recalls that there were great discussions about which four or six stars should be represented as the caryatids and which framed in the temple's interior. The concept clearly relates to the Museion, the ancient Greek idea of the museum as a place of learning and hero worship.



159

Neal Potter

42 x 30cm
Not signed. Inscribed:
'MOMI 1987'
Not framed

Brief Description:

A large-scale model of the upper half of the Statue of Liberty is shown with a wall displaying graphics behind. Below is a reverse view showing the interior containing further graphics. There are pairs of figures next to each element. Annotated in black.

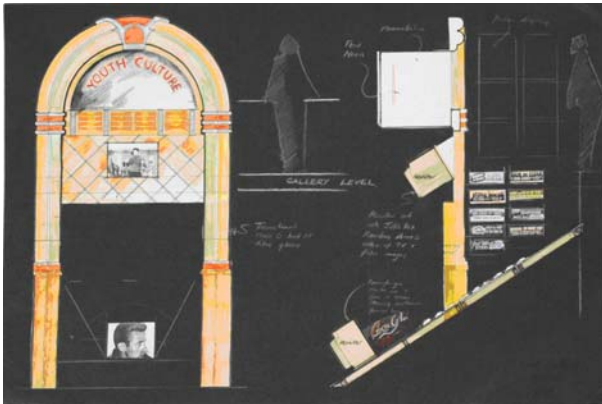
Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Search for National Identity

This sketch concept visual served two purposes. Firstly, it was a creative response to the theme 'Search for National Identity' in the intellectual master plan for the Museum of the Moving Image. Secondly, it was an attempt to use a particularly spectacular movie property in the British Film Institute's collection. It is a pencil sketch that was quickly rendered in pen and Magic Marker.

Monitors showing American television are set into the 'crown' of the Statue of Liberty to communicate the idea that the whole world was watching programmes such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty*. The hollow interior contains graphics and an audiovisual presentation exploring the impact of this on national identity, suggesting that big business is behind it all, and asking whether television culture should be global or national.



160

Neal Potter

34.5 x 52cm

Not signed. Inscribed:
'Youth Culture MOMI
1988'

Not framed

Brief Description:

Cut-out drawing of jukebox in elevation on the left. On the right cut-out drawings representing two 'monitors' and nine small vehicles on a ramp. Two chalk drawn figures appear at the top, centre and right of image. Annotated in white with red highlights given to 'Coca Cola'.

Media

Pen, spirit-based marker pen, paper, white pencil crayon and collaged photocopies.

Youth Culture

This visual was produced very late in the Museum of the Moving Image project and shows the fully developed concept for the 'Youth Culture' exhibit. See: 153 and 175 (overlay 2). Potter chose a combination of elevation and section drawings because a perspective view could not have shown enough of the exhibit to communicate the relationship between its elements satisfactorily.

The design shows how Potter tried to make creative use of the limited space remaining in the scheme. The exhibit exploited the narrow balcony corridor outside staff offices as a platform for viewing down into the exhibit. Model cars and a monitor were used to create a drive-in movie scene on the sloping display. This

was framed by the front of a Wurlitzer jukebox with a monitor set in at high level to show clips of iconic films and television shows that affected or had been affected by youth culture. This used the random access capability of laser-disk video technology. Both sides of the exhibit were decorated with movie posters.

The structural elements of the exhibit were drawn in pen and Magic Marker on layout paper. These were cut out and mounted on black paper; surrounding elements were then drawn and annotated in white crayon. Reduced photocopies of drive-in movie posters and film stills were collaged in to provide graphic detail.



161

Neal Potter

42 x 59.5cm
Not signed. Inscribed:
'MOMI 1987'
Not framed

Brief Description:

Recreation of a television studio with two manned cameras, sound boom, overhead lighting, backdrop with 'Shirebrook School present' and 'LWT MOMI studio', and three figures at a control desk in the foreground. On the left two figures look over a red barrier into the exhibit, on the right is another group of figures.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen, paper and pencil crayon.

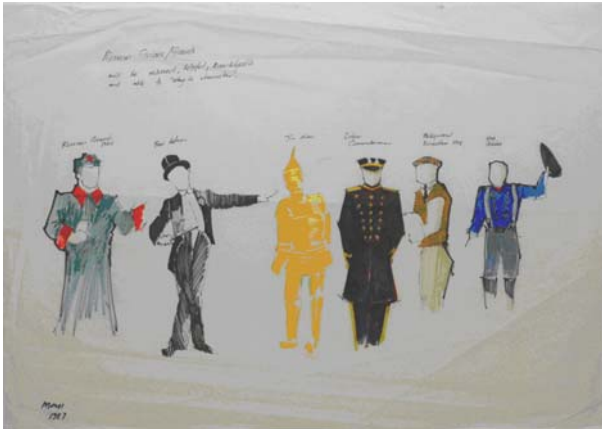
LWT MOMI Television Studio

This visual was produced in 1987, very late in the Museum of the Moving Image project, when exhibition construction was already underway. By this stage in the design all of the major spaces in the museum and the passages of smaller exhibitry were largely determined. The final big space shown here was for a television studio exhibit.

Sometimes Potter would suggest potential sponsors for Tony Smith, MOMI's fundraiser, to approach. In this case, however, Smith would have prompted Potter to produce the drawing. It emphasises the scale and atmosphere that he was aiming for specifically to try to persuade London Weekend Television to sponsor the exhibit. The reference to 'Shirebrook School' was to draw attention to the educational aspect of the exhibit. It was,

incidentally, the school that Potter attended 1960-7. Many visuals for the project even from the very beginning use red line to suggest barriers. This may be an unconscious shorthand gesture on Potter's part; in the finished exhibition there were no red handrails or barriers.

The visual was produced using a range of techniques favoured by Potter during the MOMI project. The basic perspective was delineated in pencil on layout paper. This was then rendered in pen and Magic Marker, cut out and mounted on black paper so that finishing touches could be applied in white pencil crayon. Although this visual does not have any additional collaged elements of printed or photocopied ephemera, it is a technique Potter would also use to create areas of graphic detail quickly.



162

Neal Potter

42 x 59cm
Not signed. Inscribed:
'MOMI 1987'
Not framed.

Brief Description:

Six costumed figures
labelled above images
from left to right: 'Russian
Guards 1920, Fred
Astaire, Tin Man, Odeon
Commissioner, Hollywood
Director 1918 and USA
Cavalry'. Fred Astaire and
Tin Man are cut out and
applied. Annotated in
black.

Media

Pencil, pen, paper and spirit-
based marker pen.

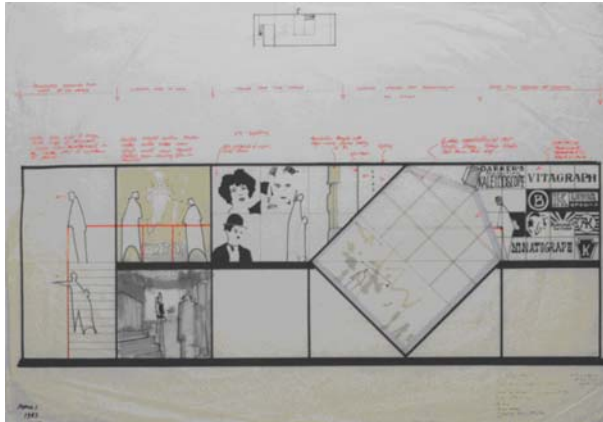
Museum Guards

These sketches, dated 1987, show costume ideas for the actors who provided live interpretation at the Museum of the Moving Image. Two years earlier Potter had been impressed with the 'space ride' at the CN Tower in Toronto, Canada, particularly the way that actors were used to extend the experience from a few minutes to probably an hour. He was also aware of the use of actors at Wigan Pier in the UK. These and other events had persuaded Potter of the potential of 'in character' interpreters to bring an exhibition alive. At MOMI Leslie Hardcastle was of the same mind.

Ideas for MOMI actors included a Russian guard on the agitprop train, a dancer in Hollywood, the Tin Man, a cinema commissioner, a Hollywood director and a US Cavalryman. Not all of these were used. The Russian guard on the agitprop train was one of the more successful uses of acting. One not illustrated here,

the magic lanternist, was also a very effective role. The actors were responsible for museum security as well as live interpretation as the annotation indicates: 'Museum guards will be extrovert, helpful, knowledgeable and able to stay in character.' This principle was carried forward to other projects. The British pavilion at Expo '92 in Seville, where Potter used actors (mime artists) to overcome the Spanish impression of Britain as a cold and aloof nation.

The costumes were manufactured by Berman and Nathan, the famous theatrical costumers, and it would have been expensive to make several sizes of each to suit the actors rotating in each role. However, these quick sketches in pencil, pen and Magic Marker were unlikely to have been part of the briefing process. With over a year still to go before opening, they were part of the process of developing the overall museum concept.



163

Neal Potter

42 x 59cm
Not signed. Inscribed:
'MOMI 1987'
Not framed

Brief Description:

Sectional elevation divided into a grid on two levels. Figures, portraits and graphic elements appear in several grid squares. A stairway is indicated on the left and a tilted space in the centre cuts across both levels. A small plan above the main drawing image. Annotated in red.

Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Early 20th Century

This visual shows a sectional elevation through part of the Museum of the Moving Image. The lower level is the undercroft, the upper level the main deck of the museum. It is dated 1987 and explores how several exhibits dealing with early 20th century topics might be integrated into the space created by breaking through the concrete slab of the main deck.

The graphics on the right-hand side of the visual are early film makers' advertisements and the figure is looking down through the glass top of a daylight film maker's studio. This structure is tipped through 45° and represents generically the British pioneers who, like Georges Méliès in France, did very adventurous work in the early years of the 20th century. Top left of the early film studio is

a suggestion of one of the caryatids on the 'Temple to the Gods' exhibit. A thumbnail sketch plan towards the top edge of the sheet indicates how the second staircase might lead up through the temple, although it was actually done a different way. The centre of the drawing shows the classic Theda Bara and Charlie Chaplin images on the upper level and between these and the staircase is the famous 'Uncle Sam Wants You' poster. On the lower level is the 'Cinema Goes to War' exhibit which featured a trench with a camera on a tripod.

The drawing is a ruled grid sketched into in pencil and then worked up in pen and Magic Marker and annotated in red pen.



Neal Potter

42 x 59cm
Not signed. Inscribed:
'MOMI 1987'
Not framed

Brief Description:

Front façade of an Odeon cinema with a row of red front doors and two figures approaching the entrance. A commissionaire stands to the centre and to the left is a queue of figures. 'ODEON' and 'BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES' appears above the doors.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen, paper and pencil crayon.

Odeon - Best Years of our Lives

This visual is one of many that were produced to develop the Odeon exhibit for the Museum of the Moving Image. It is mid-way through the design process and does not show the much more dramatic frontage, based on the Odeon in Leicester Square, that was eventually built.

The 'Yellow Brick Road' was an idea for wayfinding that could have run through the whole museum. The *Brighton Rock* cinema poster on the right features the then chairman of the BFI, Richard Attenborough, in one of his early roles. To the left the figures queuing for the cinema would have constituted an interactive audio-based exhibit to present information about cinema audiences

in the 1930s and '40s and the part that cinema played in life before television. This connects with the title 'The Best Years of our Lives', as does the decision to emphasize the glamour associated with cinema-going. Liz Heasman, one of the MOMI researchers, had provided Potter with many photographs of the 'picture palaces' of the period: their luxurious, fantasy quality was in sharp contrast to the basic conditions and drab decor of the typical home.

The visual started as a sketch perspective in pencil which was then rendered in pen and Magic Marker, cut out and mounted on black paper and finished in pencil crayon.



165

Neal Potter

32.5 x 50.5cm ?

Not signed

Not framed

Brief Description:

Temple façade centre of the drawing with four caryatids supporting a triangular pediment. Adjoining to the right rear of the temple is a shop front; fascia reads 'Charles Chaplin Inc'; above are two rows of Chaplin portraits. Three figures are approaching the temple. Numerous figures peer into the shop window.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen, paper and black and white photocopy.

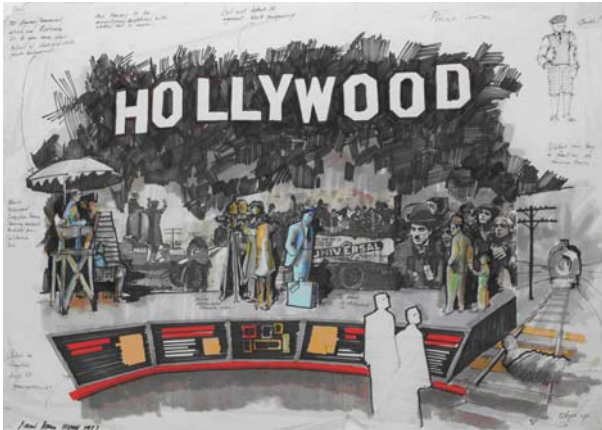
'Temple to the Gods' and 'Charlie Chaplin Inc.'

This is a sketch perspective visual for the 'Temple of the Gods' and Charlie Chaplin exhibits at the Museum of the Moving Image. One can see the emerging relationship between the Temple and Chaplin exhibits and that the decision to break through the concrete slab into the undercroft had not yet been made. This means that, although undated, the drawing is from mid-way through the design process, probably mid-1987.

The Temple is still a rather 'flat' concept at this stage but shows Potter was trying to develop the 'glamorous marblesque temple' image. See: 148 and 158. In this version the foreground pavement is inspired by the 'Walk of Fame'. 'The Yellow Brick Road' was a possible wayfinding device for the whole museum. Here it leads

to a door in the temple frontage through which the visitor would have seen the cheap scenery construction supporting the glamorous facade. It re-emerges to lead past the Chaplin exhibit.

There was never the space at MOMI to realize the more spectacular effects that would have done justice to many of Potter's exhibit concepts. As Potter notes, this is a case in point, on the scale of the Earth Galleries Atrium, which he designed some eight years later, the 'Temple to the Gods (of Silent Cinema)' would have been, in his own words 'a fabulous experience'. The initial pencil perspective sketch was rendered in black pen and Magic Marker, cut out and mounted on white paper with a montage of black and white photocopy images of Charlie Chaplin.



166

Neal Potter

42 x 59.5cm
Signed: 'Neal Potter
MOMI 1987'
Not framed

Brief Description:

Shallow curved stage with graphics on a sloping front edge and figures of director, film crew and actor on stage. Two figures in the foreground. Black backdrop has black and white photographic images of scenes from the cinema with 'HOLLYWOOD' above in large white lettering. To the right is a train track with bound figure on the rails. An isolated figure is placed at top right. Annotated in black.

Media

Pencil, pen and spirit-based marker pen.

Hollywood Stage

This visual is an early attempt at devising the Hollywood exhibit for the Museum of the Moving Image. Probably dating from February or March 1987, it features figures representing director, film crew and actors against background images, and an interactive exhibit involving visitors being tied to a railway line with a back projection of a speeding train coming towards them.

The concept of a circle of theatrical sets was inspired by an exhibit on Irish emigration to America designed by Vic Valance for Mellon Park in Northern Ireland. Potter was trying to recapture something of the drama in Valance's use of figures looking back from gangplanks to express the emotion of leaving the old country

behind. Valance was a colleague with whom Potter had shared an office when working for the British government's Central Office of Information 1978-85.

As with other drawings of the time, this was a pencil sketch quickly rendered with pen and Magic Marker and was a creative response to a theme in the intellectual master plan produced by MOMI's researchers. This concept was not used; through discussion in production meetings the exhibit developed into the idea of the studio as a 'factory' where the different departments come together to manufacture a movie.



167

Neal Potter

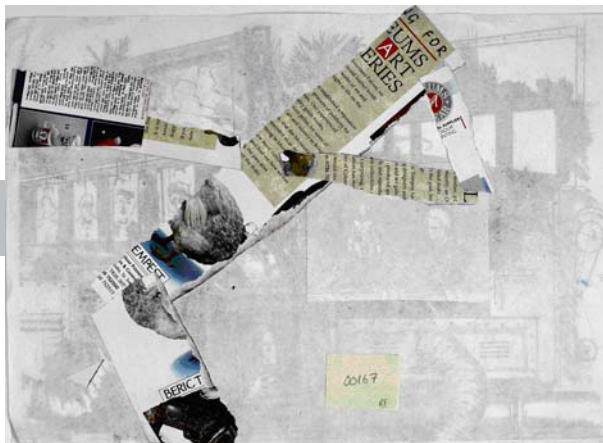
29.5 x 42cm
Not framed

Brief Description:

The foreground shows machine elements and several cinema screens and posters. At centre left is a black and white cinema screen with silhouetted audience figures. A full-colour film-strip loops across the image. Torn magazine strips are pasted on the reverse.

Media

Pencil, black pen, blue wax crayon and collage of magazine print.



100 Years of Cinema

This visual is one of a set produced for the 'Centenary of Film' exhibition planned by the British Film Institute to take place in a warehouse on the site that is now the EXCEL exhibition centre in London's Docklands. See: 143, 168-171.

It is one panel of a triptych and tries to capture the character and atmosphere of the show in one sweeping composite image. On

the right one can see suspended graphics on a moving rail system, running through the space a continuous 'film-strip' of backlit images, and in the background the suggestion of a film theatre showing a classic silent movie. The visual language of industrial machinery and a layered, almost surreal atmosphere is the concept Potter was aiming for.

The drawing was worked up in wax crayon with cut-out windows to reveal print images cut from magazines. The choice of medium was purely pragmatic, whatever was to hand. Other visuals for the project were produced using his more usual combination of pen, Magic Marker, collage and occasional touches of gouache.



168, 169, 170

Neal Potter

168 Reverse inscribed:
'One piece of film many
projectors!'



100 Years of Cinema



171

These sheets are taped together to form an 'L' shaped triptych. Top left is a colour photocopy of 167. 169 was produced in exactly same way as 167. 170 is a colour photocopy of an original artwork not included in the loan collection.

The images flow one to another to provide a broad brush impression of the exhibition concept. The project was not realized. See: 143.

171 is a colour photocopy of sheet 169.



172

Neal Potter

26.5 x 122cm

Board 1: 26.5 x 36cm

Board 2: 26.5 x 45cm

Board 3: 26.5 x 40cm

Not signed. Inscribed:

'MOMI' on reverse of

Board 1

Not framed

Brief Description:

Four evenly-spaced television cabinet-shaped structures with three frames of film-strip between each. Studio lights hanging above and numerous silhouetted

figures in the spaces below with sketched detail of exhibitry. Annotated in white crayon with two 'ENTRANCE/EXIT' signs in black pen.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker pen, paper, gouache and magazine print collage.

Television

This visual was produced late in the design process for the Museum of the Moving Image. It confirms the sequence of exhibits in the television area designed into the undercroft. It is structured around three big enclosures with interactive exhibits in the spaces underneath. They were inspired by an early television cabinet design. The screen images were printed on seamless tensile fabric panels using Scanachrome, which was at the time a relatively new computer-controlled ink-spraying process.

The production process at MOMI started with the period after World War 1, the 'Temple to the Gods' exhibit, and gradually worked through the layout putting the larger spaces in place and punctuating the route with the passages of smaller installations. The decision to break through the concrete slab of the main deck and open up the undercroft was made quite late in the project. As a consequence the team had to go back to the design of this space

much later. The fact that television themes were given less attention and generally treated later in the process also reflects the curatorial penchant for cinema, particularly early cinema history. Potter even found this frustrating at times; at earlier production meetings there was a tendency to revisit certain themes repeatedly which made it a struggle to work through the whole storyline to create the basis for a balanced exhibition master plan.

The visual was produced on three hinged boards. The elevation is very accurate and informed by technical drawings produced for construction. Potter drew the television cabinet shapes on layout paper. These were cut out and mounted on blue board. The elevation was outlined in black pen and the drawing rendered using a combination of Magic Markers, gouache and white crayon. Small rectangles of cut-out magazine print were collaged in to represent the smaller screen images.



Neal Potter

44 x 54cm

Not signed. Inscribed:
'FIRST EVER IDEA FOR
MOMI 1986'

Not framed

Brief Description:

Clock face with stylized eyes, nose and mouth in the centre. Alternative images and numbers appear on three overlays to represent the 12 points of the clock. On the right handwritten script in black below the title 'Time' in bold outline lettering.

Media

Pen, spirit-based marker pen, acetate and collage of paper and magazine print.



Time

This visual, dated 1986, is the first exhibit concept Potter produced for the Museum of the Moving Image. Still in 'World Fair mode' Potter imagined 'Time' as a character appearing on the central screen to talk the audience through the origins of screen imagery by taking them on a journey back through the ages to the wall paintings of a prehistoric cave. The only element of the concept that survived was the use of the electronic 'fire stick', which relies on persistence of vision to create an image in space as a row of LEDs on a moving stick flash on and off. This appeared in a small model with cave men in the introduction to the museum.

It was a spontaneous idea inspired by a number of sources, specifically the Canadian Pacific pavilion at Expo '86 and Jorvik Viking Centre in York. It is likely that Potter also had in the back of his mind the film version of H G Wells' story 'The Time Machine'. Had it been suggested to him at the time the exhibit

concept would undoubtedly have involved a replica of the 'time machine' to meet the demand for explicit film reference wherever possible in the exhibition.

Potter has put the concept forward several times on subsequent projects. See: 127. It was eventually realized as a 'courtroom' exhibit in 1998 in Singapore; the judge became the character of 'Time' who took the audience back to look at big decisions in Singaporean history. This tells us something important about the best exhibit concepts: they embody a communication principle that is about engagement, fun and focus, and they can be adapted to a variety of contexts and information content.

The base illustration was produced using marker pens and collage of magazine print. Three acetate overlays with further collaged elements suggest how the screen images would change.



174

Bob Harvey

29.5 x 42cm
Not signed. Originally
in portfolio wallet with
handwritten label (likely
by Potter) 'Timex Museum
USA'
Not framed.

Brief Description:

Exhibition space with
curved back wall showing
images of large clock
cogs, alarm clocks and
'INGERSOLL' logos and
a clock-face ceiling. A cog
-shaped table-top showcase
in the left foreground,
another upright one on
the right and part of a
third one in the centre
middle distance all display
wristwatches. Numerous
figures view the displays.

Media

Pen and spirit-based marker.

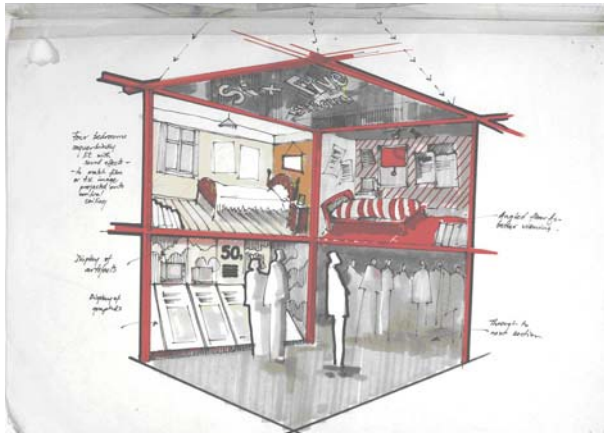
Timex 8

This visual by Bob Harvey probably dates from early 1994. Potter would have briefed Harvey and provided some very loose sketches. It belongs to a series that presents Potter's creative exploration of the potential for an Ingersoll/Timex museum in the United States of America. See 128-133.

Potter recalls that one day he met Harvey at London Bridge Station to brief him. As he was frantically sketching on little bits of paper

an IRA bomb went off on the station and they experienced a moment of surreal dislocation as they watched peoples' strange reactions to the problem.

The concept is the same as that suggested in 130, rotating, cog-shaped show cases displaying collections of wrist watches, but here fleshed out in a detailed perspective rendered in marker pens.



175

Neal Potter

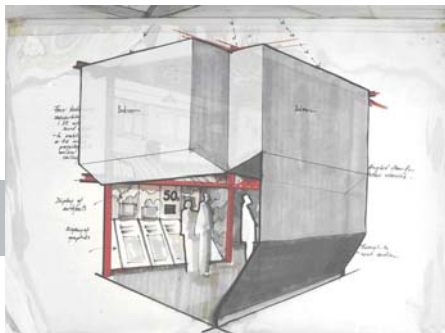
30 x 42cm
Not signed
Not framed

Brief Description:

Base drawing: two story exhibit interior. Rooms outlined in red. Upper level shows two bedrooms, lower level graphics on the left and a crowd on the right. First overlay: boxed-out enclosure of the bedroom sets and lower level display. Top overlay: 60s style juke box frontage with two figures on the left. Annotated in black pen.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker, two paper overlays attached.



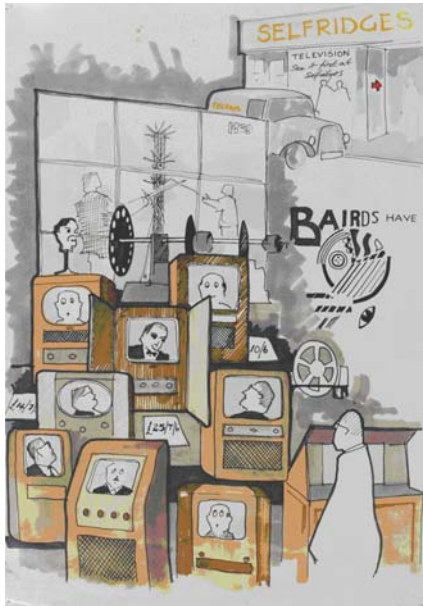
Stereophonic Youth Culture

This is a sketch concept visual for the Youth Culture exhibit at the Museum of The Moving Image. It is an advance on 153 and introduces the image of the juke box. The concept here is that teenagers' bedrooms from four decades could communicate changes in youth culture and that we enter this world through the music.

On an upper level and viewed from below the stark bedroom of a 1950s council house is contrasted with the more colourful 60s room full of ephemera and posters, images of film stars and pop stars. Lighting would be synchronized with an audio track. Beneath

this display are associated graphics and artefact displays. The ceiling has a back-projection of the contemporary TV pop-music programme *Six-Five Special*.

The base drawing is a perspective pencil sketch on layout paper of the exhibit interior, which is rendered in pen and Magic Marker. The first of two layout paper overlays shows the enclosure; the shallowness of the bedroom sets indicates that they would have incorporated forced perspective or sculpted relief effects. The top overlay shows the juke box frontage through which people would enter the exhibit.



177

Neal Potter

30 x 21cm
Reverse inscribed in Potter's hand 'Please return to Neal Potter 184 Brighton Rd. Purley, Surrey CR2 4HB' and has two attached labels. A yellow note and a masking tape label.
Not framed

Brief Description:

8 TVs showing black and white images of male faces. A figure at the bottom right peers at TV screens. Video wall behind display shows image of TV mast and two figures holding swords. Top right of page small van in front of a shop window, fascia sign reads 'SELFRIDGES'.

Media

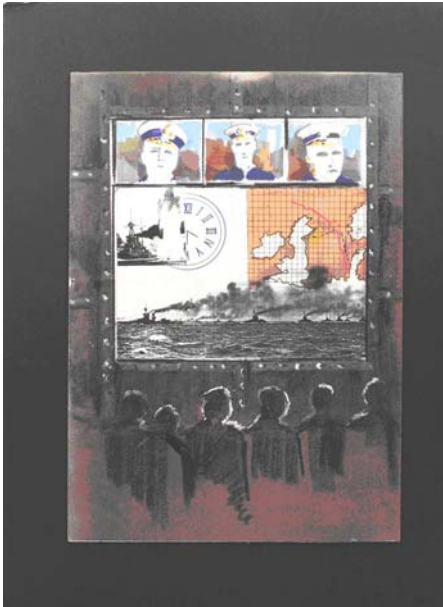
Colour photocopy.

The Coming of Television

This is an early sketch concept visual for the Museum of the Moving Image. It is a creative response to the theme of 'The Coming of Television'. See also 154 - 'Television Finds its Feet.'

It uses a version of the 'talking head' concept to present a debate about who invented television. The pioneers of television would appear on monitors set inside the period television cabinets in a 1930s shop window and create the illusion of talking to each other. Synchronized video would have been achieved using the emerging laser-disk technology.

This is a colour photocopy of the original drawing which was a pencil sketch quickly rendered in pen and Magic Marker. While Potter was working on this drawing Antony Jay, the co-author of the *Yes Minister* television series, visited his studio and thought the idea was 'brilliant'. It struck Potter that the programme's style of humour would be ideal for this exhibit and intended to ask Jay to write the script. Unfortunately, for reasons of space, the concept was not used. As a matter of post-rationalization the theme became part of the Odeon space because in the 1930s television was conceived as something that could be shown in cinemas.



178

Neal Potter

53.5 x 40.5cm

Not signed. Back inscribed in Potter's hand: 'Multi media Concept for Battle of Jutland at National Maritime Museum.

"Battleships" Never realized – became "Firepower"

Not framed

Brief Description:

Six silhouetted foreground figures looking up at a multi-screen presentation.

Three framed heads of naval officers along the top below which are black and white images of battleships at sea, a gridded map of the British Isles and part of a clock face.

Media

Colour photocopy mounted on tinted paper mounted on 5mm Foamcore board.

Battle of Jutland

This concept visual was produced for a proposed 'Battleships' exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in 1989. It is another version of the multiple talking heads concept and would have used laser-disk technology to synchronize the various interacting characters on the screens. See: 177. The characters would be the different players involved in the Battle of Jutland discussing strategy and tactics. Then on the big screen below there would be animated maps or diagrams overlaid on archive film footage.

Potter was invited to do the project, had agreed and made career decisions in preparation but catastrophe struck. The NMM cancelled the project through lack of funds; the previous special

exhibition on the *Bounty* had failed to attract the expected crowds and then visitor numbers plummeted further when a boat crashed into Greenwich Pier. At the time 40% of the NMM's visitors travelled to Greenwich by Thames river boat.

The original drawing was built up in layers. The top screen images were sketched on layout paper in Magic Marker, the lower ones were collage black and white photocopies. This was colour photocopied, cut out and mounted on tinted card. The background was rendered with Magic Marker and gouache highlights were added last.



179

Brief Description:

Six small images are of roundels on green plinths with white caption below. Each on black background. Large image of five overlapping roundels on green bases, black background.

Neal Potter (with elements by Bob Harvey)

51 x 76.5cm

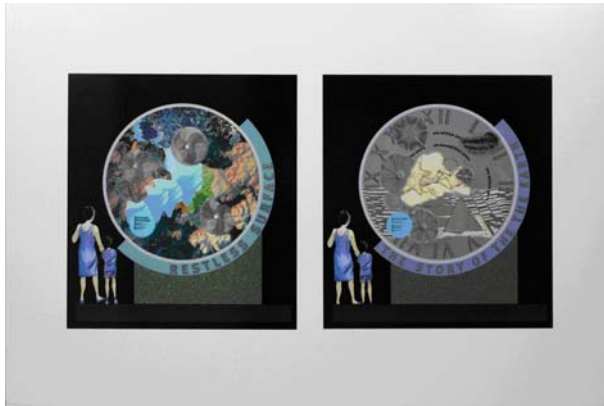
Not signed. Back inscribed: 4 of 6

Not framed

Centre roundel has title lettering 'THE EARTH GALLERIES'. Six figures in the foreground.

The Earth Galleries Orientation

This composite print shows the orientation exhibit designed by Potter in 1999 for the Earth Galleries at the Natural History Museum. See: 144, 145 and 192-199.



180

Neal Potter (with elements
by Bob Harvey)

51 x 76cm

Not signed. Back inscribed:
2 of 6.

Not framed

Brief Description:

Two images drawn in elevation. On the left a roundel containing a matrix of coloured textures. On the right a roundel grey fossil images on a clock face. Identical figures of a child and a woman are positioned to the left of each image.

Media

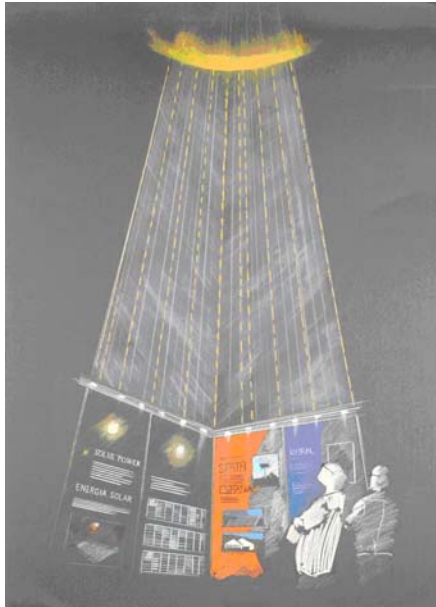
Photoprint

'Restless Surface' and 'The Story of the Earth'

This computer generated visual shows two elements of the proposed orientation exhibit for the Earth Galleries at the Natural History Museum. See: 144, 145, 179 and 192-199.

'Restless Surface' is represented as a visual collision of rock textures and water, and 'The Story of the Earth' as fossils overlaid on a clock face. The figures are cut from visuals produced on earlier Potter projects by Bob Harvey. Through building up a library of unique drawn elements and textures, Potter has learned to exploit

Photoshop to his advantage. But he is not a fan of 3-D rendering software: generally he finds the results too 'flat' and lacking in character. Joanna Jarvis, who worked for Potter from 1996 to 1999, developed a very effective method based on scanning her original hand-drawn outlines and working them up in Photoshop. Potter encouraged and admired this work: 'she was really good at it ...because she had a good drawing style.' He also added, wistfully, 'I bet she's making a fortune for somebody else right now.'



181

Neal Potter

75 x 55cm
Not signed
Not framed

Brief Description:

Exhibit shows four panels of text and images at eye-level with two figures in the bottom foreground. Above in steep perspective is a yellow sunlight image. Reverse has black pen sketch of similar design.

Media

Pencil crayon, pastel pencil, black pen and possibly chalk pastel on blue tinted paper.

Quadrscope Expo '92

This visual is a perspective view of the quadrscope design for the British pavilion at Expo '92. See: 141. It emphasizes the height at which the illusion was set although it is not able to fully capture that it could only be viewed looking up at a steep angle. The information graphics shown at eye-level are impressionistic at this

stage but in retrospect one can understand from the visual why the quadrscope was not very successful: people didn't look up.

The pencil crayon drawing is rendered in pastel pencil; there may also be some traditional chalk pastel.



182

Neal Potter

44.5 x 31.5cm
Reverse inscribed: 'EMI
EXHIBITION 1990
Unrealised'
Not framed

Brief Description:

A bar with seated outline figures on bar stools at left and right and standing figure behind the bar. Back bar has 'Coca Cola' logo. Text: above drawing 'WURLITZER SPEAKER Model 580', below drawing 'REFRESHMENTS BY DAY - PARTY BY NIGHT'.

Media

Pencil, pen, paper and spirit-based marker.

Wurlitzer Coffee Bar - EMI

This visual drawn in elevation was an idea for a small in-theme coffee bar that could be included in an exhibition for EMI in 1990. The design is an accurate interpretation of a Wurlitzer loudspeaker case; Potter has even noted the model number '580'. A similar concept was proposed for the box office. See: 183. Potter's ideas for the exhibition were not used.

The original pencil sketch on layout paper was rendered in pen and Magic Marker, cut out and mounted on yellow paper and finished with background cross-hatching in dark grey marker pen.



183

Neal Potter

31.5 x 44.5cm
Reverse inscribed: 'EMI
Exhibition 1990 unrealised'
Not framed

Brief Description:

White outline figure standing in front of an elaborate kiosk frontage circular window carries title 'ADMISSIONS'. Text above 'THE BOX OFFICE CAN BE STYLED ON A PACKARD PLA-MOR SPEAKER'.

Media

Pencil, pen, paper and spirit-based marker.

Packard Box Office - EMI

This rendered elevation shows an idea for the box office of an exhibition for EMI. The concept is similar to 182 and, as noted on the drawing, is an accurate rendition of a Packard Pla-Mor Speaker case. Potter's ideas for the exhibition were not used.

The original pencil sketch on layout paper was rendered in pen and Magic Marker, cut out and mounted on yellow paper and finished with background cross-hatching in dark grey marker pen.



184

Neal Potter

54.5 x 66.5cm
Signed: Inscription in
Potter's hand 'North Sea
Oil & Gas Concept Sketch
Expo '85 Tsukuba Japan
Neal Potter 84'
Not framed

Brief Description:

Large roundel image. Outer ring is segmented and describes the view down a tunnel. The centre shows an underwater themed interior with oil rig legs, submarine and seascape. Middle ground figure inside the tunnel. Interior has two figures on the left and two on the right. Inscription is top left of the sheet.

Media

Pen, spirit-based marker pen, paper and gouache.

North Sea Oil and Gas

This visual is one of a series produced for the design of the British pavilion at Expo '85 Tsukuba, Japan. See: 136, 140 and 185-7. It shows the view down a tunnel entrance to part of an exhibit on North Sea Oil and Gas conceived to give the impression of an underwater environment.

The visual demonstrates the drama and shear scale of exhibit that could be created as a way of persuading BP or Shell, the potential sponsors, to get involved.

The central area is a drawing on layout paper rendered in pen and Magic Marker which has been cut out and pasted onto board the tunnel and floor areas are rendered in gouache and Magic Marker.



185

Neal Potter

54.5 x 63.5cm
Signed and dated 1984
Not framed

Brief Description:

Four eyes appear above and below blue cloud-like forms. Black silhouetted figure in left foreground. Text in black pen at left reads, 'Concept sketch Environment Section Expo'85 Tsukuba, Japan N. Potter 1984'. Silver pen border.

Media

Pen, spirit-based marker, paper and white pencil crayon.

Environment

This visual is one of a series produced for the British Pavilion at Expo '85, Tsukuba, Japan. See 136, 140, 184, 186 and 187. This visual continued the thinking behind the 'Britain in Focus' concept (136) by exploring the idea of 'Seeing Britain'.

The concept relies on using the image of an eye to draw attention to the new technology, much of it British, we were starting to use for remote sensing of the environment and how this was changing perceptions of our home planet. The visual was produced in January or February 1984 and exemplifies the bold theatrical approach that caught the COI management's attention and led to Potter's assignment as the project leader. The screen images of the eye in the upper part of the space are an interesting indicator

of what was current in visual culture; although Potter and his colleagues at COI were becoming computer savvy, pixilation was still a relatively novel visual idea.

The visual is built up using an initial marker sketch on layout paper and cut-out paper for areas of flat colour, mounted on black board and finished in Magic Marker, gouache and white crayon and pen. Potter's focus on creating a complete sense of surrounding space with mood and character in his exhibition concept visuals can be traced back to his early education. He recalls his art teacher at school persuading him 'to paint with atmosphere rather than paint 'chocolate box'.



186

Neal Potter

49.5 x 69.5cm

Signed and dated Feb 1984

(in pencil)

Not framed

Brief Description:

Left wall covered in tilted panels with red swirling abstract designs. Ceiling panel has large image of fetus. 3 figures in the centre with 'pill' sculpture to their right and large head form in left foreground.

Text at top right reads 'MEDICAL RESEARCH EXPO'85 JAPAN'.

Annotated in pencil.

Media

Pencil, pen, spirit-based marker, gouache and paper.

Medical Research

This visual is one of a series produced for the British pavilion at Expo '85. See: 136, 140, 184, 185 and 187. The theme is 'Medical Research' and continued Potter's exploration of 'seeing Britain' associated with information about new technologies. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Scanning was 'hot off the press' and through the amazing false colour images it generated was capturing the popular imagination. DNA fingerprinting had also recently been demonstrated for the first time. Potter tried to exploit these to the full by creating a surround theatre of images and models.

The visual has only one collaged element, the white line along the front edge of the ceiling, otherwise it is patient, hand-drawn

and rendered in detail using pen, markers and gouache. Potter is particularly proud of the way the abstract imagery of inside the body came out and comments, 'it looks translucent ... the image of the fetus, it's watery enough to be real'. The DNA structure on the right was added about a week after the visual was first presented.

The DNA structure recurs in Potter's work. The Singapore Science Centre exhibits (1992-96) included a giant DNA model representing the 'DNA structure of Singapore'. Joanna Jarvis used the concept again in the 'Gene Worlds' exhibit in Bonn in Germany (1997-8).



187

Neal Potter

50 x 64.5cm
Inscribed: 'Concept sketch
for "British Way of Life"
Expo 95 Tsukuba, Japan.
N. Potter 84'.
Not framed

Brief Description:

Left and right sloping walls in the form of open books with text and images. Upper background space has giant postcard images, one of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer and others of everyday scenes. Numerous silhouetted figures in front of the exhibits. Reverse has calibrated graph markings.

Media

Pen, spirit-based marker, white pencil crayon and collage of magazine print.

British Way of Life

This visual is one of a series produced for the British pavilion at Expo '85 Tsukuba, Japan. See: 136, 140 and 183-6. It continues the idea of 'seeing Britain' which Potter was exploring consistently at this time. It was intended as an entrance exhibit or orientation to 'Britain in 1984' and shows representations of Britain in the popular media. It further develops the 'animated postcard' idea

only partially revealed at the back of the first concept visual produced on the project (136).

The visual is a montage of magazine print fragments pasted into a simple perspective drawn in Magic Marker and pencil crayon.



188

Neal Potter

Reverse inscribed: 'Concept sketch for Peace Tunnel VE Day Celebrations Hyde Park. 1995'

Image: 59 x 42cm

Mount: 84.5 x 59.5cm

Mounted on board

Not framed

Brief Description:

Triangular section tunnel lined with information panels and numerous images of adult and children's faces. Uplighters recessed into edges of the floor. A group of figures looking up into the exhibit.

Media

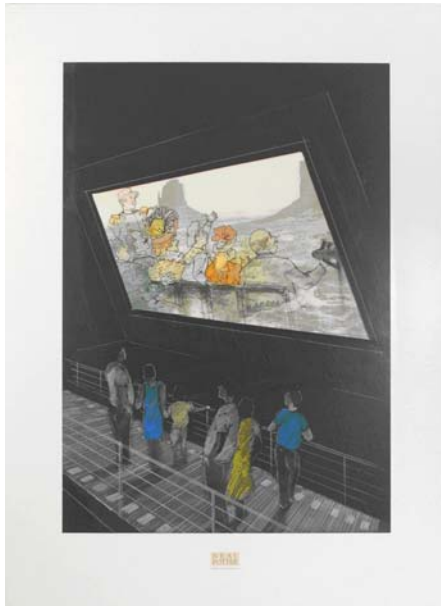
Pen, pencil crayon, spirit-based marker pen, magazine print collage, paper and gouache.

Peace Tunnel

This is a visual for the 1995 VE Day Celebrations in Hyde Park. Potter was invited back to the COI to help them pitch for this event. There were very few companies with the experience to undertake this kind of project. The job was won by the producer of all the major Royal events at that time, Major Michael Parker.

The giant walk-through kaleidoscope is the same concept as the animation exhibit Potter proposed the same year for the British Film Institute's '100 years of Cinema' exhibition. See:

143). The difference between the two exhibits is in the imagery and the mood. Where 143 is a colourful dance of images full of surprise, this version would have been a slower-paced and more emotionally-charged experience based on the theme of peace. The concept is very simple and highly adaptable and one to which Potter has returned, most notably for the 'Sex' exhibit in the 'Walk Through the 20th Century' exhibition at the Cultural Centre of Belem, which was designed with Alison Stapley for the 100-day festival preceding Expo '98 in Lisbon.



189

Neal Potter

Image: 59 x 42cm
Mount: 77 x 57cm
Reverse inscribed: 'Cinema
100 Concept Sketch N.
Potter'.
Mounted on cream board
Not framed

Brief Description:

Suspended walkway in foreground with six figures viewing a large screen showing seated figures in period costume in front of a monochrome landscape. Printed label below image 'NEAL POTTER DESIGN ASSOCIATES LTD'.

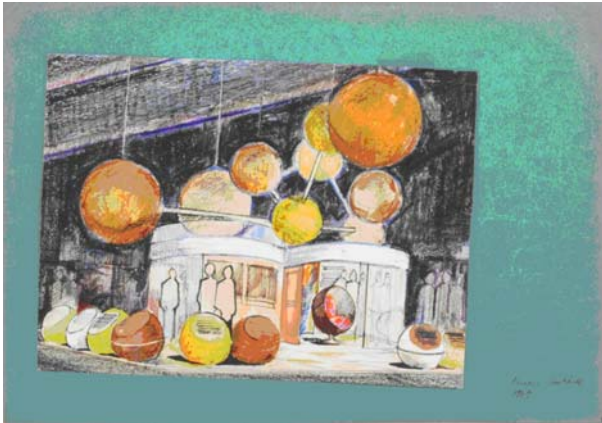
Media

White pencil crayon, pastel pencil, black and white photocopy and tracing paper.

Cinema 100

This visual was produced for the 'Hundred Years of Cinema' exhibition planned by the British Film Institute in 1995. See: 143. This visual shows a continuation of the central walkway. The screen represents a cross-fade between a Lumière cinema poster and a Western. The purpose was to show how wide-screen projectors could be used in the space.

The drawing was a fairly straightforward perspective in white pencil crayon, rendered in pastel pencil with a collaged element of tracing paper over a black and white photocopy.



190, 191

Neal Potter

190

Image: 22.2 x 30cm

Mount: 29.5 x 42.5cm

191

Image: 23 x 23cm

Photos ea. 6.5 x 10cm

Mount: 29.5 x 42.5cm

Mounted on green paper.

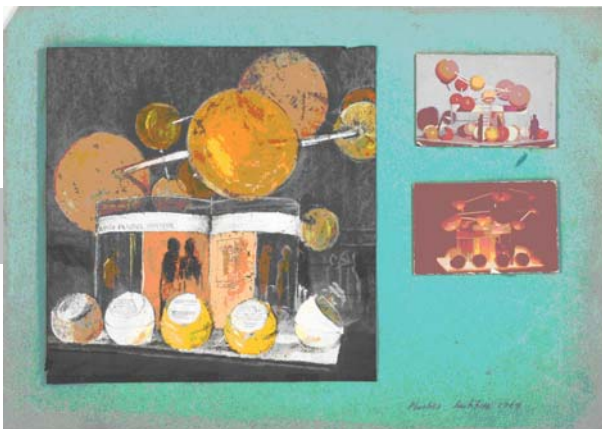
Not framed

Brief Description:

Exhibition stand comprising two white curved modules with a molecule model on the roof and several globe information stands in the foreground. Numerous figures on and in the background of the exhibit. Text bottom right both mounts: 'Plastics Institute 1969'.

Media

Pen, wax crayon and gouache.



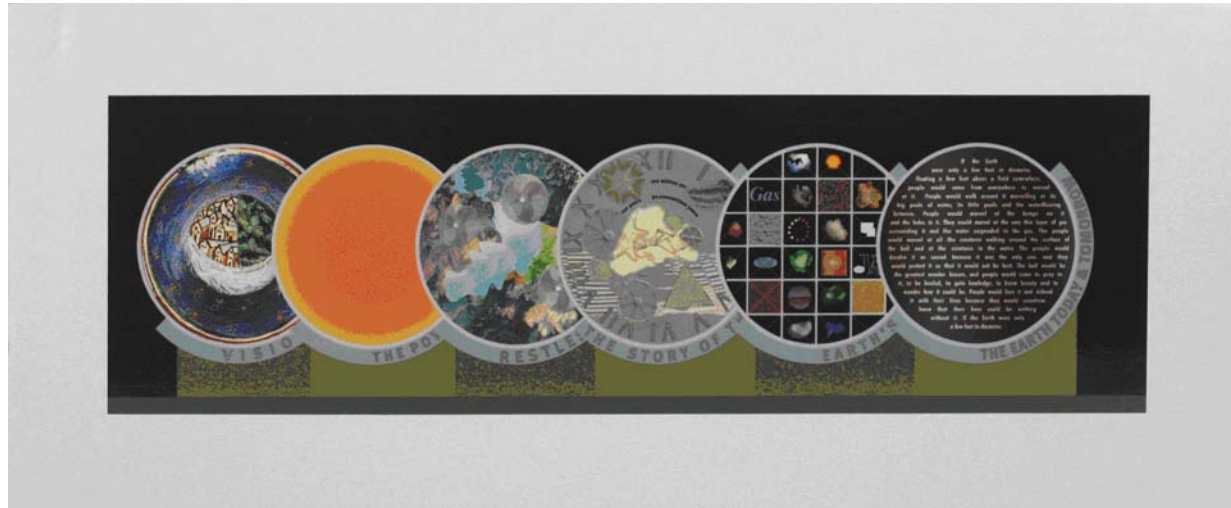
Plastics Institute

plastics company and everything on the stand had to be made from plastics. The roof feature was intended to symbolize a particular molecule used in manufacturing plastic. This gesture prefigures the most distinctive qualities of Potter's mature work: scale and theatricality.

Most of Potter's visual work at the time would have been painted in gouache and water-colour but these drawings were rendered in the more difficult medium of wax crayon. There is some gouache on 191 which has flaked off. The photographs of the model are contemporary and were intended as part of the presentation. Potter experimented with lighting the model from below to heighten the drama. Potter never fully developed his model-making skills, always preferring the greater scope that visualizing gave him for creating and communicating atmosphere.

These sketch concept visuals were for a project undertaken at Chesterfield College of Art where Potter studied Environmental Design. The course did not originally include exhibition design. However, in 1969 Potter had won a competition to design an exhibition to be staged at the House of Commons that November. On the strength of this success the college introduced exhibition design into the curriculum and Potter had found his vocation.

These drawings and model probably date from the Summer term of 1969. The brief was to design a small commercial stand for a



192

Neal Potter

192

24 x 58.5cm

Not signed

Not framed

Media

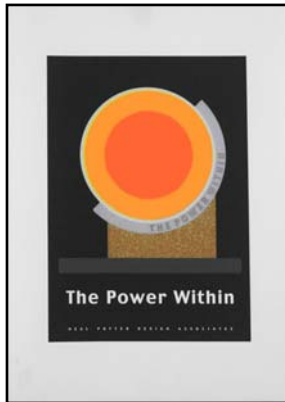
Photoprint of artwork
produced using Adobe
Photoshop software.

Earth Galleries Orientation

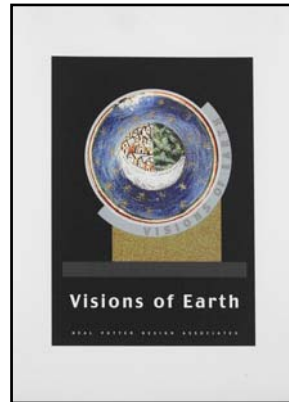
These visuals are all part of the series that describes the orientation exhibit for the Earth Galleries at the Natural History Museum, London. See: 144, 145, 179 and 180.

The composite view (192) shows an alternative configuration with the roundel elements stepped back from right to left; compare 179

in which they are stepped back from the centre. Each of the smaller visuals shows the panel relating to one of the Earth Galleries. In sequence they are: 'The Power Within' (193), 'Visions of Earth' (194), 'Potential Movement' (195), 'Earth's Treasury' (196), 'The Earth Today and Tomorrow' (197), 'Story of the Earth' (198) and 'Restless Surface' (199).



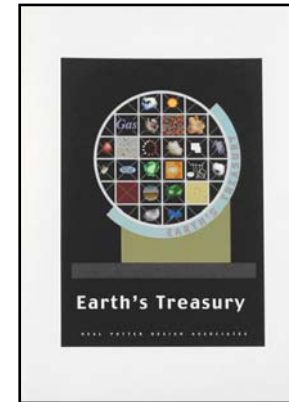
193



194



195



196

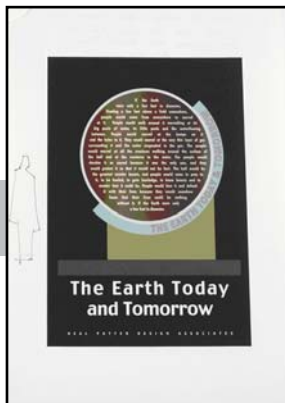
193-199

Neal Potter

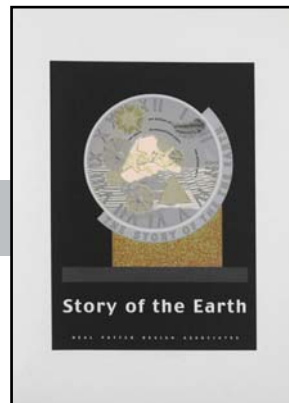
193-199
each 42 x 29.5cm
Not signed
Not framed

Media

Photoprints of artwork
produced using Adobe
Photoshop software.



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Many drawings in this collection are signed and dated but in almost every case the signatures and dates were added in 1999 and 2000 when the two batches of material were assembled and loaned to the University of Lincoln. It was not, and is not, normal practice for designers to sign and date their working drawings and design

Afterword

In one sense Potter's work speaks for itself; when we visit an exhibition we can judge fairly quickly whether it works and what kind of imagination was behind its design. Visit a few Potter designed exhibitions and one is left in no doubt about his ability to absorb and filter complex information, explore concepts creatively and collaboratively to achieve a coherent narrative and an engaging vision, and communicate effectively with clients, sponsors and colleagues. However, knowing 'that' something is the case is not the same as understanding 'how' and 'why' it is so. Clearly there are many senses in which design does not speak for itself. I hope here I have begun the task of helping the designer's work to speak on other levels and to other audiences. By deepening our understanding of design we provide new insights into the world that we live in and shape through our actions. We also strengthen the place, significance and value of design knowledge.

visually. They tend to regard them as ephemeral, simply as a means to an end, a way of communicating design ideas to colleagues, clients, sponsors, contractors, the press and only very occasionally the public. They rarely regard them as works of art, which is perhaps understandable, and rarely as valuable documentary records, which is less understandable. They are incredibly valuable documents because they embody the peculiarly powerful type of knowledge that designing creates, knowledge about the realizable possibilities for change in practical situations. With this in mind I want to entreat practitioners to sign and date their sketches and working drawings and archive them; keep some paper if possible, for the rest, take digital photos or scans, dump computer files onto disk, label them and store them in a safe place. One day I, or someone like me, may come knocking on your door, or you may wish to come knocking on mine.

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All quotes are from interviews with Neal Potter recorded on 2 and 3 April 2007 unless otherwise indicated.

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ISBN 9781860502217

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